

**[BEST
CORPORATE
PUBLICATION
2014]**
SA PUBLICATION FORUM

wild™

R34.90



Witness the kill
**PHOTOS
TO DIE FOR**

TAKE YOUR FAMILY
Eco-style at
Rocherpan

Log cabins
at Bontebok

SHADOW BOXING

*'Some birds just can't
get enough of one
particular window.'*

- JOEL ROERIG

COASTAL HIDEAWAYS

Road trip to
4 beach reserves

Camping decks
in Knysna Forest

Tree chalets
in Goukamma

CONSERVATION UPDATE

KRUGER'S Martial eagles

In flight with the king of the sky



9 771993 790001

03011



**HOW TO ID CHEETAHS | TICK-LIST: TERRIFIC TEN
ZIPLINE OVER HOTTENTOTS HOLLAND
OFF-ROAD IN MOUNTAIN ZEBRA
PLACES TO PROPOSE | BABY REPTILES**



explore | conserve | enjoy

SUMMER 2014/2015

www.wildcard.co.za



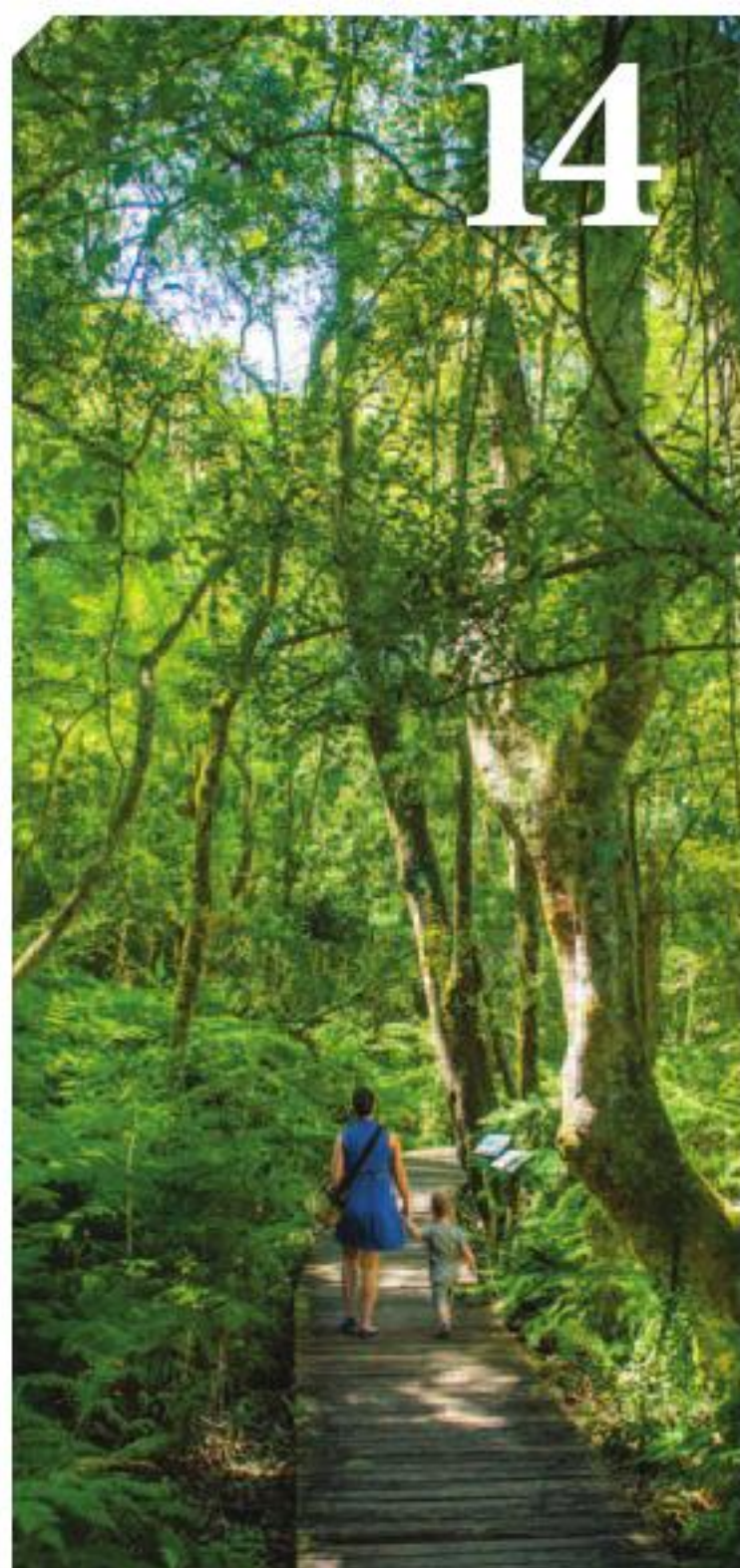
Innovation
that excites

NISSAN PATHFINDER. TAKE BACK CONTROL.

Nothing should stand in the way of life, not even the city. Which is why the Nissan Pathfinder is equipped with an advanced ALL-MODE 4x4 Electronic Driving System, to help you effortlessly power your way out of any metropolitan trap. Built with a rugged and domineering exterior, this powerful 4x4 SUV puts you in total control. From only R483 200, you can take charge, and drive out to freedom in the Nissan Pathfinder.

Advanced All-Mode 4x4 | Dynamic Performance | Premium Quality





28

ROCHERPAN

“Exploring the reserve’s coastline, a surprise awaited us at the lookout spot: whales!”

– MARION WHITEHEAD

WILD BITES

- 4 Letters
- 6 Bontebok chalets
- 8 How to ID cheetahs
- 10 Bird Island
- 12 Birding beat
- 35 Get a *Wild Card*
- 96 Competition

PHOTOGRAPHY

- 90 Turn on the sun
Tips for turning bright light into eye-catching photos

PARKS

- 14 Garden Route hideaways
Find secret escapes away from the holiday hordes
- 28 West Coast wonder
Relaxing comes naturally at Rocherpan's eco-cabins
- 62 Places to propose
Five dreamy destinations where you can go down on one knee
- 78 Road trip along the coast
Three days, four reserves ... grab your *Wild Card* and go!

ADVENTURE

- 56 Get high in Hottentots Holland
A new zipline tour offers breathtaking views of hidden places
- 82 Off-road at Mountain Zebra
Stay in a remote stone cottage and take your pick of three 4x4 day trails

CONSERVATION

- 22 The eye in the sky
Can drones help us in the fight against poaching?

CONTENTS

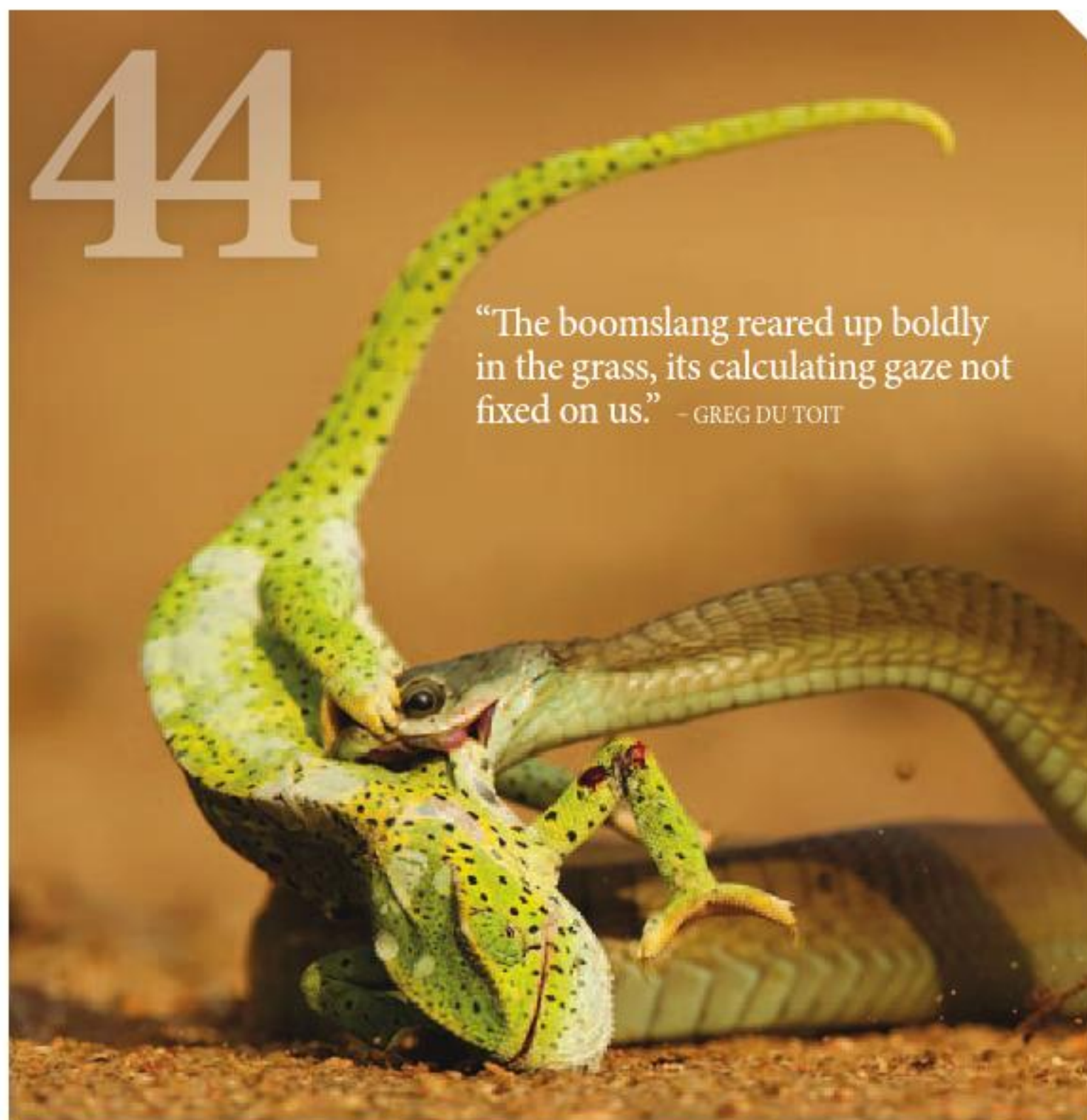
Wild
SUMMER
2014 / 2015



36

“The likelihood of seeing one on any given day has declined by over half over the last 20 years.”

– DR ARJUN AMAR



44

“The boomslang reared up boldly in the grass, its calculating gaze not fixed on us.” – GREG DU TOIT



64



94

- 70 NATURE**
Stamvrug
Look out for its scarlet fruit this summer



- WILDLIFE**
36 Kruger's martial eagles
Unravelling the mysteries of their ranging behaviour
44 Predator vs prey
Dramatic pictures capture life-and-death moments
64 Terrific Ten
Are these the most iconic animals in the bush?
72 Shadow boxing
What happens when birds see their reflections

- KIDS**
94 Cracking good eggs

COVER IMAGE
ALBERT FRONEMAN



MARTIAL EAGLE

freedom
to experience

Skukuza Airport Kruger National Park.

Airlink has extended its network to include Skukuza Airport gateway to the Kruger National Park, one of the largest natural wildlife reserves in the world. The daily direct flights from Johannesburg and Cape Town to Skukuza Airport will provide guests with easy access to adjoining world renowned Private Game Lodges, the SANParks lodges and camps within the Kruger National Park. A short air transfer from Skukuza Airport to Nelspruit KMIA will allow guests to connect conveniently to Livingstone (Zambia) and to Vilanculos (Mozambique). For more information visit www.skukuzaairport.com or contact your booking agent.

Spread your wings, fly Airlink – Freedom of the African sky.



AIRLINK
Freedom of the African Sky

EDITORIAL BOARD

GLENN PHILLIPS, SANParks
SHERAAZ ISMAIL, CapeNature
GWYNNE HOWELLS, Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife
RAY NAGURAN, Msinsi Resorts
ANN REILLY, Swazi Big Game Parks
HEIN GROBLER, Wild Card

WILD CARD ENQUIRIES

0861 GO WILD (46 9453)

wildcard@sanparks.org

International Wild Card members call

+27-12-428-9112

EDITOR Romi Boom | wildd@tipafrica.co.za

DEPUTY EDITOR

Magriet Kruger | magriet@tipafrica.co.za

ART DIRECTOR

Riaan Vermeulen | riaan@tipafrica.co.za

TEXT EDITOR Marion Boddy-Evans

PROOFREADER Margy Beves-Gibson

CONTENT DIRECTOR Igna Schneider

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Joan Kruger

CREATIVE DIRECTOR Petro du Toit

MAGAZINE ENQUIRIES

subs@tipafrica.co.za

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr Arjun Amar, Anika Barnard, Bridgena Barnard, Ilse Bigalke, Emma Bryce, Justin Fox, Albert Froneman, Fiona McIntosh, Cheryl-Samantha Owen, Joël Roerig, Matthew Schurch, Ron Swilling, Ann and Steve Toon, Marion Whitehead, Andreas Wilson-Späth

PHOTOGRAPHY/ART

Shaen Adey, Werner Bollmann/www.aafotostock.com, Johan and Bridgena Barnard, Duncan Butchart, Peter Chadwick, Cheryl-Samantha Owen, David Clulow, Chad Cocking, Greg du Toit, Justin Fox, Greatstock/Corbis, iStockphoto, David Jenkins, Willem Kruger, Hannes Lochner, Bruce Molzen, Amanda Naudé, Scott Ramsay, Daleen Roodt, Joel Sartore, Shane Saunders, Shutterstock, Lee Slabber, Peter Slingsby, Ron Swilling, Mark Tittley, Heinrich van den Berg, Rudi van den Heever, Albie Venter, Riaan Vermeulen



PUBLISHED BY
Tip Africa Publishing

PO Box 13022, Woodstock, 7915

T: (+27) 021-447-6094 | F: (+27) 021-447-0312

wildd@tipafrica.co.za

EDITORIAL QUERIES 021-448-5425

BUSINESS Jaco Scholtz

jaco@tipafrica.co.za | C: 083-303-0453

ADVERTISING John Hyman

john@jbmediaconnection.co.za

T: 011-467-0513/0415

PUBLISHER Theo Pauw

theo@tipafrica.co.za | C: 082-558-5730

Reproduction Resolution Colour
Printing Paarl Media



Wild magazine and Wild Card are registered trademarks of SANParks. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not reflect those of the Wild Card or any of the Wild Card programme partners. Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy but Wild magazine cannot be held liable for inadvertent mistakes. Prices correct at the time of going to print.

WILD CARD PARTNERS



Faith is the bird that feels the light when the dawn is still dark."

An early bird myself, I waken at the crack of dawn. As soon as I've opened the balcony sliding doors, a pair of greater striped swallows swoop inside and perch on the light fitting in front of the mirror. This is the third summer the pair has returned from the tropics and there's lots of serenading, talking, preening and kissing their reflection. Unlike those zany birds that attack windows or car mirrors! Read "Shadow Boxing" (page 72) to find out more about this strange phenomenon.

Another birding question we at Wild have been mulling is why the martial eagle is in trouble, with numbers having fallen by around 40 per cent over the last two decades (page 36). Even a large park such as Kruger may not be big enough to protect all the life stages of this charismatic raptor whose territory equals the home range of a lion pride.

Although beach holidays in December are synonymous with crowds, you can find stillness in a number of Cape coastal reserves, such as Rocherpan, De Mond, De Hoop, Agulhas and Goukamma. The latter is one of our favourite hideaways along the Garden Route (page 14). A brand new attraction for those spending the festive season near Cape Town is ziplining above Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve. You'll be enraptured by the bird's eye view of hidden places.

For anyone who loves the outdoors, a year's unlimited entry to more than 80 parks, reserves and resorts is the ultimate gift, so get them a Wild Card. As a bonus, they'll receive Southern Africa's top conservation and wildlife magazine four times a year. Long live Wild holidays!

Romi



EVERGREEN

Wild is printed on paper certified by the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC™), a non-profit organisation that promotes responsible management of forests. The FSC™ label shows that the paper comes from trees harvested from Well Managed Forests and other controlled sources.



WILD LETTERS



Connect with us at www.wildcard.co.za | wilded@tipafrica.co.za | PO Box 308, Woodstock, 7915

ALL SMILES AT BERG-EN-DAL

Berg-en-Dal survived serious flooding earlier this year, but with the Rhino Trail still largely intact around the perimeter of the well-treed, shady rest camp, excellent bushbuck and birding sightings are offered without leaving the fenced area. In September 2014, on check-in, my guests from the USA and I received a smiling welcome from SANParks' Nompumelelo Shongwe. Not often one encounters such a smile and sense of humour at reception offices.

John Davison, Pinetown

pitched in. Within 10 minutes our camp was set up.

We've never seen as many animals at one park as at Addo. At six in the morning we were awakened by the roar of a lion and within a few seconds you just saw feet running to the lookout post. Half an hour later we encountered two males about one kilometre from the gate and followed them as they walked towards the gate. We already want to go back to Addo but first Kruger, Tankwa and Bontebok. Having a *Wild Card* is definitely a bonus!

Erik Groothuijzen

PITCHING UP AT ADDO

We retired at the end of May 2014 and are fortunate to be able to spend the next couple of years touring. July saw us at Etosha, Kgalagadi and Augrabies. We've just returned from Karoo, Golden Gate and Addo National Parks. Without exception, the staff members at all the national parks are more helpful, courteous and efficient than anywhere else. The cherry on the cake was at Addo when staff came to help us put up camp after we'd driven six hours. We were tired and without saying anything they just

KEEN TO SUBSCRIBE

We are very interested in *Wild* magazine and wonder whether it is possible to subscribe to the magazine without being a member.

Greet and Willem Peeters-Verhagen

Unfortunately there is no system in place for subscriptions at present. Until such time, you can read the magazine in electronic format with our *Wild* app. The app is enriched with pictures and additional content. It's available from the App Store for iPads or from the Google Play store for Android devices. – Ed.



LOOK WHO'S CAMPING!

My husband and I, after having been retired for about 10 years, decided to go camping, a pastime we had never thought about when we were younger. What fun! Having taken some advice from great friends, we bought an off-road camping trailer and have enjoyed many lovely evenings in the African outdoors. Our friends also persuaded us to buy a *Wild Card*, and what good advice. We were delighted to receive *Wild* magazine in the post. I believe it must be one of the best, if not the best, wildlife magazines. It is most informative, full of interesting articles and super photographs, and devoid of far too many adverts. The article "In an Ancient Land" was brilliant to say the least and so inspiring that we have decided to set sail for the Karoo National Park shortly.

Cheeki Larter



KAROO GEOLOGY

It is dolerite not granite in the Karoo National Park. A reader pointed out the error in our article and referred to a poort along

the western side of the park which has a horizontal dolerite sill and a fountain. In response, retired UCT geology expert Dr John Rogers provides fascinating background to the formations in the park. Go to www.wildcard.co.za and type "Karoo geology" in the Search box. – Ed.



WINNING LETTER Cheeki Larter wins a Jafran 85L backpack valued at R1899 from Hi-Tec. Send us your letter for the chance to win.

The capacious 85-litre Jafran backpack has a moulded back and adjustable straps, plus an integral rain protector to keep your goods dry during sudden summer showers.

HI-TEC
INSPIRED BY LIFE

WINNERS: *Wild* Spring 2014 Karoo stay: Don Searle • Mopane print: Susanna Hawyes



BONTEBOK NATIONAL PARK

TAKE IT EASY

Lang Elsie's Kraal Rest Camp now boasts new family chalets that are spot on for a weekend retreat. **By Bridgena Barnard**

Come recharge your batteries in serene surrounds and add to your tick-list at the same time.



Bontebok National Park lies 240 km from Cape Town.

Why go away if all you want to do is read a book? It's a question I've often been asked, and the answer is obvious: I have a family to consider. So while I was looking for a relaxed weekend to recharge, my nearest and dearest, who had no interest in being transported to a world of dragons, heroes and romance, had other priorities.

Comfortably seated in a deck chair on the deck of our log cabin at Lang Elsie's Kraal cottage, I paid no attention to my family's pleas of "I am hungry" or "What are we going to braai tonight?" Accompanied by bird song and the rippling sound of the Breede River, I finally got to wolf down the pages of my book, a Christmas gift of last year. My imagination coloured the scenes from the book with the soft pinks of



The spacious lounge area leads out onto a wrap-around deck.

“The project cost around R3 million to complete and created work for 16 people and a contractor from the local communities.” Roland January, Bontebok park manager

TRIP PLANNER

The rest camp at Bontebok is on the banks of the Breede River, with wooden decks and braai areas perfectly situated to make the most of sunset. In addition to 10 one-room chalets ideal for two people (R900 a night), there are now four family units that cost R1500 a night and can sleep four people. The family units can accommodate an extra two people, R210 an adult, R105 a child. Bontebok's camping facilities are outstanding, with sites from R180 a night for one to two people. Bookings 012-428-9111

the Langeberg wrapped in loose blue clouds. The smell of the adjacent cottages' braai fires finally prompted me to put my book down and suggest our supper options.

The kitchen, fully equipped with a stove, oven, microwave and tableware for six enabled me to prep a salad and some toasties in no time, while handy hubby took care of the braai. After supper

the kids started playing cards and, apart from competitive shouts, the night was dead quiet. As they fell asleep, tired from swimming and playing outdoors, I listened to a lonely nightjar in the tree outside the chalet and felt wonderfully content. Hubby had enjoyed the birding and his treasure for the weekend was the abundance of black harriers in the area. I had escaped to never-never land. 🐾



IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

JOIN THE CHEETAH WATCH

Next time you're in Kgalagadi, use the new *Cheetah Identification Guide for the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park* to identify individuals, then submit your sightings to help the monitoring of the park's cheetahs.

By Matthew Schurch

Pictures of the Kgalagadi's cheetahs have been collected in a guide to help you identify your sightings.



The Kgalagadi is known as one of the best places in the world to view cheetahs hunting in their natural environment. Over the past eight years, many of the park's cheetahs have become well known to visitors through the field research of Gus and Margie Mills. Particular favourites have been cheetah sisters Elena and Lisette, happily showing off and enthralling many guests with their litters of cubs in the Auob River, wearing radio collars for many years.

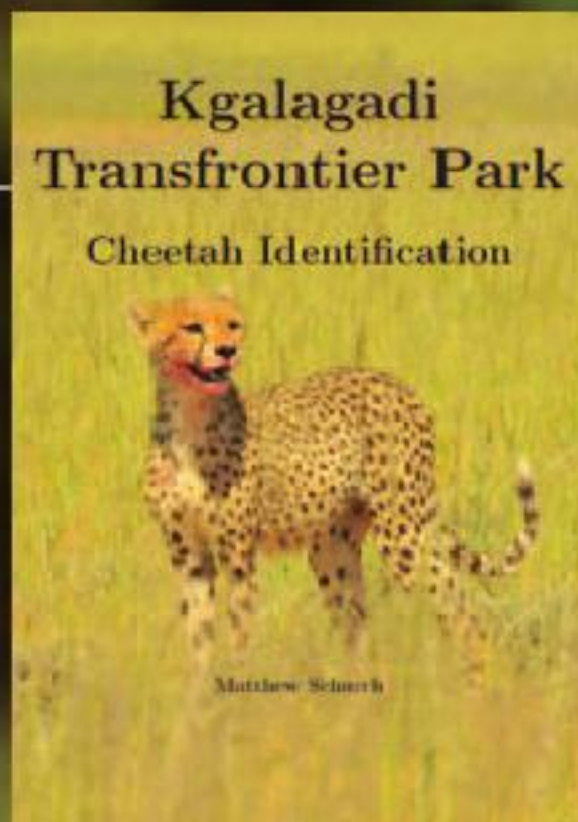
The Mills' study highlighted that cheetahs are perfectly adapted to their hunting style and their envi-

ronment. The greatest contribution to their daily energy expenditure is not from the high speed hunt as you might assume, but from the many hours they spend walking and searching for prey.

Cheetahs all over Africa suffer from kleptoparasitism, theft of their prey by other carnivores. In the Kgalagadi around 9,3 per cent of cheetah kills are stolen in this manner. Only when kleptoparasitism levels reach 50 per cent do the cheetahs' method of hunting become unsustainable. Other factors that cause the cheetahs to change their behaviour and move greater distances, such as human interfer-

ence, could push their daily energy requirements to critical levels.

To continue the long-term monitoring of the Kgalagadi's cheetahs after the conclusion of the field work, an identification guide has been created for the cheetahs, a companion guide to the Leopard Project. Over the past two years, as many reports of the park's cheetahs as could be found were studied, individuals identified and the *Cheetah Identification Guide for the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park* compiled. Visitors can use the guide to identify individual cheetahs, then submit their sightings to contribute to the monitoring of these felines. 🐾



How you can help

Submit your pictures of the park's cheetahs so that their movements and breeding success can be monitored. Use the ID guide to identify your sighting. Here are some steps that will make your task easier.

- 1 Decide on the appropriate section of the guide to use, this is typically sex or group composition.
- 2 Make a note of where you had the sighting and use this information to reduce your initial comparison sample.
- 3 Start with the inside leg spots when making a comparison. There tend to be fewer spots and they are much easier to orientate to look for a match. If you cannot see the leg spots then use what you have.

 Email your sightings to Matthew Schurch of the Kgalagadi Leopard Project at ktp.leopards@gmail.com.

To read more about Kgalagadi Cheetah identification, go to www.wildcard.co.za and type "Cheetah ID" in the Search box.

www.wildcard.co.za



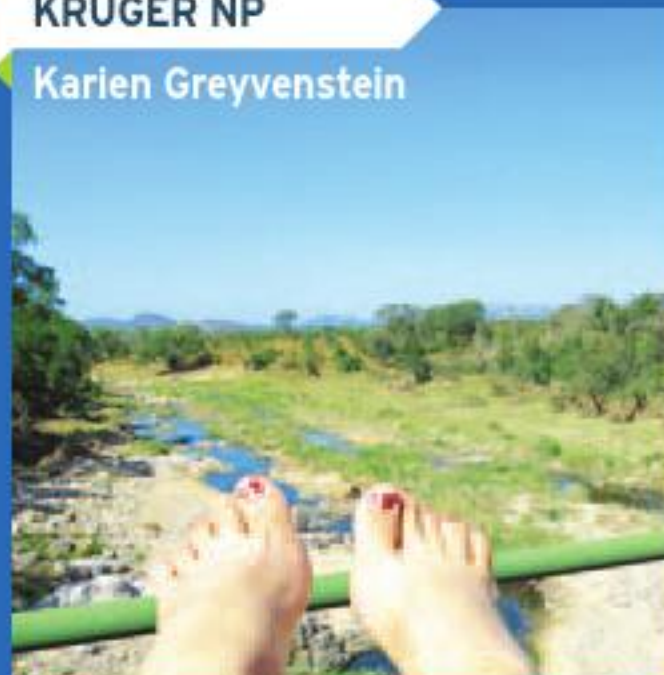
COMPETITION
Visit our page for more

WILD FOOTSIE COMPETITION

We love seeing where your feet are taking you! Check out these wonderfully wild footsies submitted by our members. If you want your footsie to be featured (and stand the chance to win a prize), go to www.facebook.com/WildCardMagazine for information on how to enter.

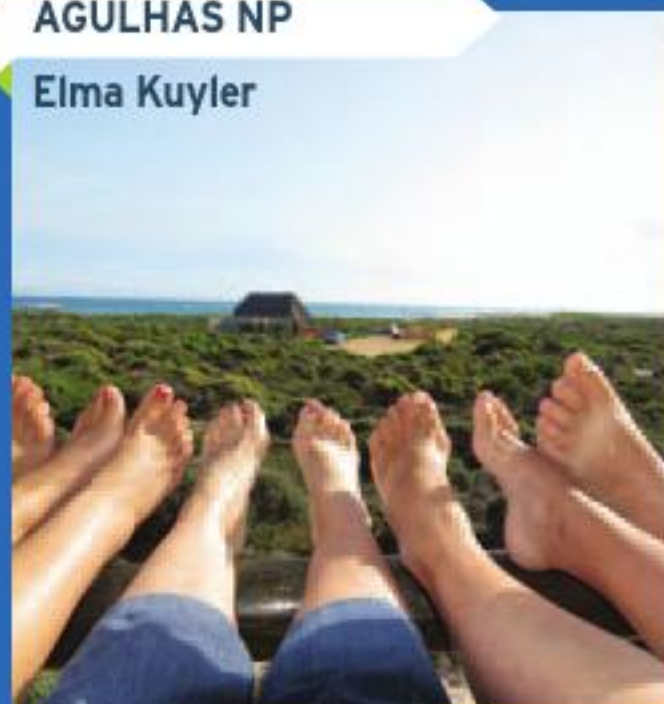
KRUGER NP

Karien Greyvenstein



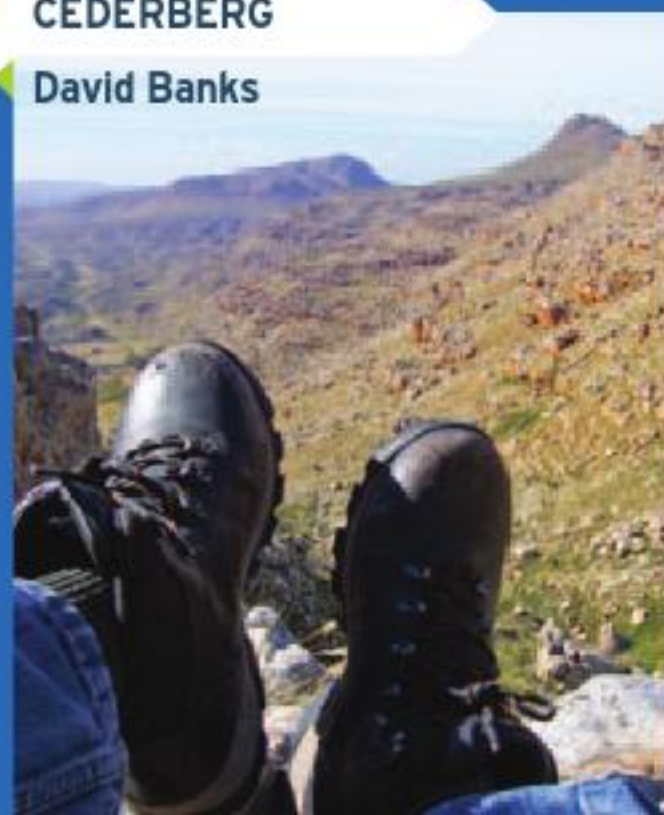
AGULHAS NP

Elma Kuyler



CEDERBERG

David Banks



DIGITAL 

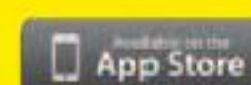


NATURE in your pocket

With the *Wild* app, you can take the magazine with you wherever you go. Plus you'll get more pictures, stories and travel tips to enjoy.



The *Wild* app is perfect for people on the go or wildlife fans who want to keep up with park news from afar. Want to look up trip info while you're in the park? No problem, the *Wild* app puts the magazine's content at your fingertips. The app is available for both Apple and Android devices and individual issues cost R49.99 a copy.



SUMMER 2014/2015 WILD 9

BIRD ISLAND

LOUD & CLEAR



CHERYL-SAMANTHA OWEN

The best time to visit Bird Island at Lambert's Bay is during the breeding season, from September to April. The hide provides a spectacle of nature, whether you are an avid birder or think you are indifferent to winged creatures. **By Cheryl-Samantha Owen**

Main picture: The new museum. Insert: The hide bustles with photographers.

Touching the Cape's western shore is an island in the Atlantic Ocean that is currently home to over 16 000 Cape gannets. The island greets you with a cacophony of squawks as you cross over the causeway from Lambert's Bay harbour and head into the bird hide. It provides a superb view of the gannet colony and seals beyond, bringing you eye level with birds in flight. Soaring in the sky, gannets are grace personified but, nearer the ground where gravity beats the wind, these bulky birds don't land but fall out of the air, accompanied by a comical thud and a loud protest from their neighbours.

Yves Chesselet is the island conservator, the equivalent of a game ranger, and his passion for islands and birds is infectious. I have seen him in action, barefoot and ankle deep in a sloshy mixture of guano and mud, rescuing juvenile gannets that were in need of hand rearing. He is a crucial part of the success story that is Bird Island.

Cape gannets breed on only six islands and are categorised as vulnerable to extinction. Contending with a polluted ocean and rapidly reducing fish stocks means that the reserve at Bird Island is especially important for their survival. In 2005, rogue seals attacked the gannets and the entire colony vacated

the island. Fortunately, Yves's ploy to attract them back with decoy gannets worked and numbers continue to grow.

"Never, never, never ever have Cape gannets been reintroduced to an island and thrived as they do here!" gushed Yves.

Two new developments on the island are due for completion in 2015: a walk-through museum, with constructed skeletons of a seal, Cuvier's beaked whale, a gannet, a dolphin and a giant model of krill; plus a visitor centre. This will include a pool from SANCCOB for African penguins that cannot be released into the wild and a touch pool with local marine life. 🐾

NATURE

IS CLOSER THAN
YOU THINK

Plettenberg Bay area

Robberg Fountain Shack

from **R875** (sleeps 4 persons)

Keurbooms - overnight canoe trail

from **R1450** (sleeps 6 persons)

Knysna area

Buffalo Valley Cabins

from **R750** (sleeps 2 persons)

Goukamma Cottages

from **R960** (sleeps 4 persons)

Goukamma Fish Eagle Loft

from **R705** (sleeps 2 persons)

Peak season rates apply during school and public holidays.
Additional person rates apply. T's & C's apply.

Take a hike over the sea sands of time, spot rare birds, butterflies and whales, cast off for the catch of the day in fresh or sea water, cruise in a river canoe, go rock climbing or just enjoy a picnic. This magical garden offers unforgettable summer journeys of discovery.

www.freshba.co.za / FBA2392



Mid-week Pensioner's Discount available. T's & C's apply.

Standard daily conservation fees apply.
Free access for Wild Card members



0861 227 362 8873 / 021 483 0190



reservation.alert@capenature.co.za



Follow us on
facebook



CapeNature

Conserve. Explore. Experience.

www.capenature.co.za

BIRDING BEAT

Black-headed oriole

With their bright yellow coats and cheerful calls, orioles personify the joy of summer.
By Albert Froneman

GOLDEN JEWELS

The liquid and fluting call of the black-headed oriole is an unmistakable part of the Bushveld. Whenever I hear the call I'm instantly transported to the tranquillity of the dense riverine forests in the Kruger National Park, where these birds are common.

Orioles are colourful birds patterned in golden-yellow and black. Their gorgeous plumage may be a clue to their name. One explanation says the family name is derived from the Old French word '*oriol*', which has its root in the Latin word for golden, '*aureoles*'. But the name also sounds like a common oriole call, so it could even be a combination of both.

In summer, there is a wealth of these beautiful birds in Southern Africa. The easiest to encounter by far is the black-headed oriole, an

abundant resident with a fairly wide distribution range. It occurs throughout the eastern half of the region, extending all the way down the coast as far as Mossel Bay. The Eurasian golden oriole is a relatively common palearctic migrant that is present from November to March, excluding the dry western regions.

The African golden oriole, an intra-African migrant, is also a summer visitor, but it is restricted to northeastern parts. Personally I have seen them only in the far northern corner of Kruger. A fourth species, the green-headed oriole, is restricted to the high altitude forests of Mount Gorongosa in Mozambique.

Orioles are omnivorous and feed mainly on fruit and invertebrates, although some other foods may be taken opportunistically. They are primarily canopy feeders and usually stick to dense foliage where they forage secretively,

EURASIAN GOLDEN ORIOLE



HENRIK GRÖNVOLD

AFRICAN GOLDEN ORIOLE



F.O. MORRIS

GREEN-HEADED ORIOLE



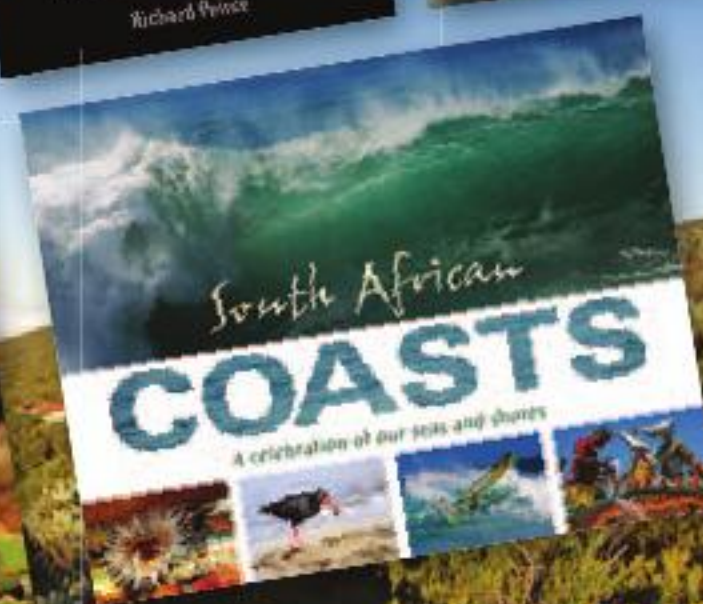
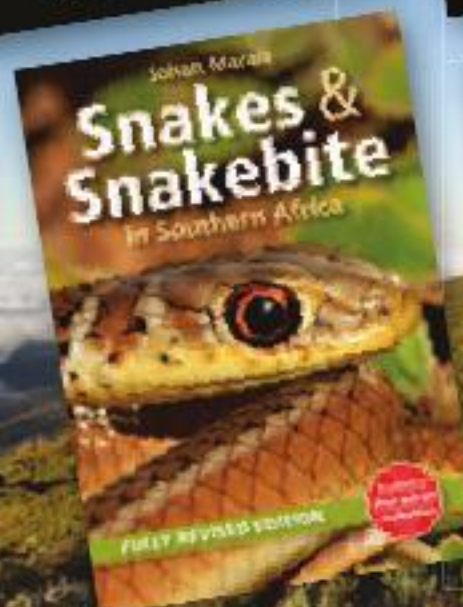
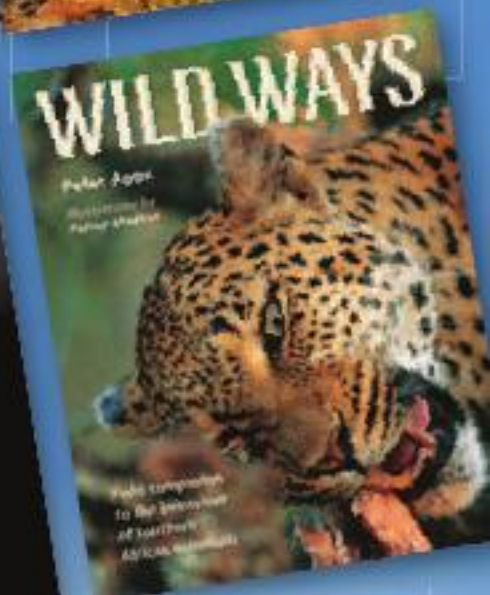
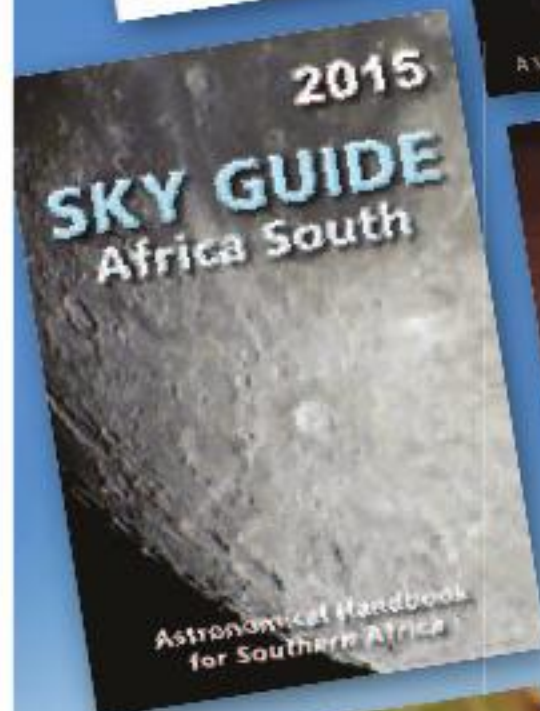
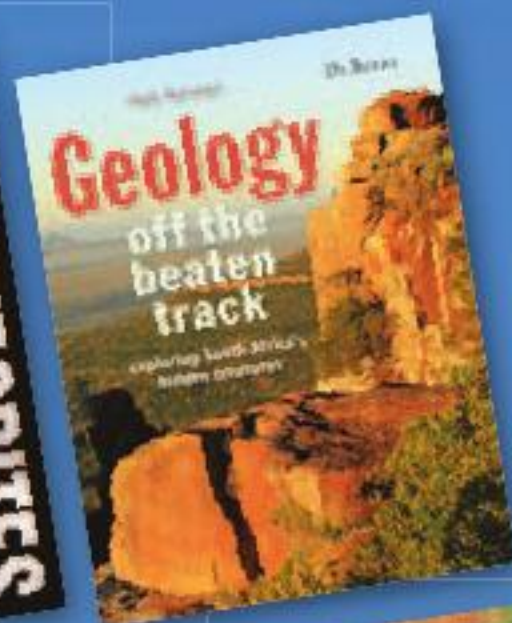
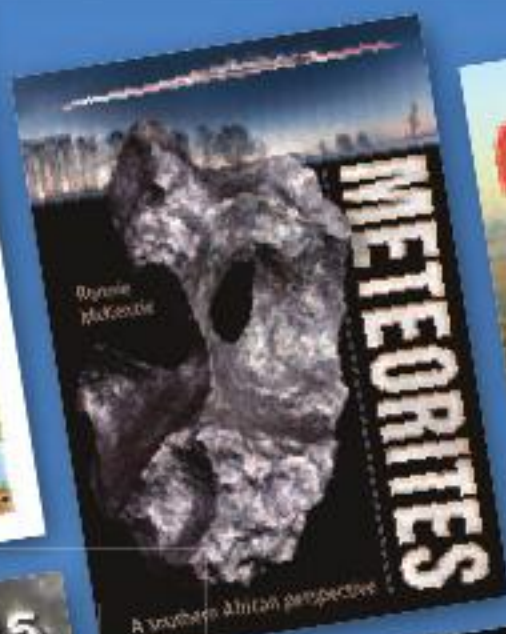
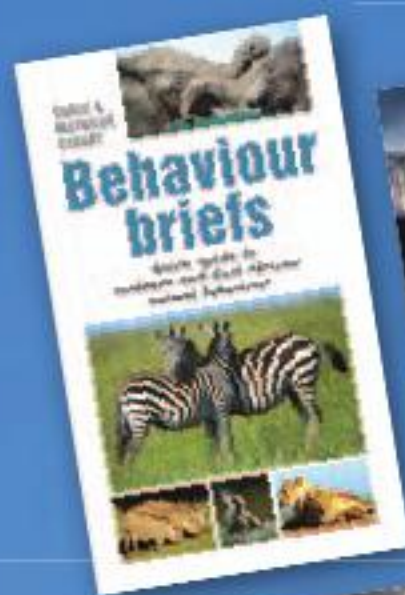
JOHN GERRARD KEULEMANS

either singly or in pairs. During winter, when food is scarcer, they venture into the open more regularly. The nectar from flowering aloes then provides an irresistible temptation to them. I have often been treated to spectacular views and opportunities to photograph black-headed oriole as they leisurely feed on an aloe only a few metres away from me. It is amazing to see how well camouflaged they are with their bright yellow plumage among the yellow aloe flowers.

Despite their conspicuous plumage, orioles can be surprisingly difficult to pick out against a leafy background dappled by the sun's rays. Typically it is only their call that reveals their presence. If you have not yet ticked the black-headed oriole on your personal bird list, make a special effort this summer to listen for it. 🐾

BUNDU BASHING

Wherever you may find yourself this holiday season, make sure you're in the good company of a Struik Nature guide.



Available at bookstores nationwide and on-line.

Join the Struik Nature Club for monthly special offers, discounts and invitations to events.

www.randomstruik.co.za/natureclub



A vibrant, sun-drenched forest scene. A large, thick tree trunk covered in green moss lies horizontally across the middle of the frame. The forest floor is densely packed with various types of green ferns. Sunlight filters through the canopy, creating a warm, golden glow and highlighting the textures of the moss and foliage. In the background, several tall, slender tree trunks stand vertically.

 PARK IN THE SPOTLIGHT

HUSH-HUSH
The quiet of
Knysna Forest
provides a
respite from
holiday frenzy.



WARNING: What you are about to read contains serious levels of awesomeness!

TOP SECRET

Yes, it is possible to find peace and quiet on the Garden Route. Give the crowds the slip a stone's throw from the N2, at Knysna's Forest Timber Camping Decks and Goukamma Nature Reserve. **By Justin Fox**

EXPOSED ROOTS LAY LIKE THE TENTACLES OF VEGETABLE OCTOPI ACROSS THE PATH. Fern fronds closed overhead in the shape of hairy parasols. From somewhere came the soft conversation of a stream; birds chirruped and insects pinged their forest sonar. Not one sound overwhelmed another, as though this great orchestra was playing a faultless tune.



Just beyond Knysna I had swung north, turning from the N2 onto the R339, and headed into deep forest. After half an hour of climbing along a rough road, I reached Diepwalle Forest Station. It has a SANParks camp in the heart of Knysna's great forest of broad-leaf trees. The accommodation comprises raised decks, each with a lean-to dining area, braai facilities and a platform on which to pitch a tent.

Diepwalle is well situated for five forest trails, ranging from 500 metres to nine kilometres. I went walking with ranger Wilfred Oraai, who's lived in the forest for 26 years and has the face of a Khoisan hunter-gatherer. He explained in a guttural, idiomatic Afrikaans how he wanted to pass on his knowledge of the forest.

Wilfred slipped ahead of me through dense foliage, his footfall making no sound. A sudden stop as he held up his hand. Above us on a bough sat a Narina trogon, its scarlet-and-green body haloed in a leafy dapple. With one beat of its wings, the bird disappeared. On we walked.

I started to notice the details of my environment. The texture of bark, the myriad leaf colours and forms, small creatures of the forest floor. Wilfred paused to allow a millipede to pass, then helped a dwarf chameleon onto a branch. He showed me how stinkwoods make use of their fallen kin by 'grafting' themselves onto the older root system, thus gaining a few hundred years' head start.

"Look here, an elephant spoor," he said, pointing to a soggy indentation beside the

You can find secluded spots within half-an-hour's drive from the holiday hub of Knysna.



path. He spoke of the elephants of yore and his many encounters with a female that frequents Diepwalle. On one occasion he bumped into her on the road at night as he was walking to Knysna. "She just stood there and I just stood there and neither of us said a word. Then she stepped back into the forest. As I continued down the road, I heard her in the trees beside me. You know, I think she was escorting me, watching over me."

Outings further afield took me north to the spectacular lookout point at Spitskop for sunrise, and back to the N2 to visit Kranshoek and the Garden of Eden. The nine-kilometre hike, or shorter, three-kilometre version, at Kranshoek takes you through dense coastal forest and along a magnificent stretch of boulder-strewn shoreline. The 'garden' offers an 800-metre meander through a gorgeous piece of forest beside the N2. It's easily accessible and provides a fine example of wet high-forest, an unusual vegetation type with mighty stinkwood, kalander and wit-els trees.

On my last afternoon at Diepwalle, I took a walk into the forest and sat beneath a giant Outeniqua yellowwood, enveloped by its flying-buttress roots. The sun was

*Not one sound overwhelmed another,
as though this great orchestra was
playing a faultless tune.*

Ranger Wilfred Oraai knows
the forest's secrets, including
its largest inhabitants.



Escape the midday sun
with a walk in the forest.



Enjoy birding from your
deck at Diepwalle.



Guide Meagan Vermaas offers
walking tours in the forest
near Jubilee Creek.

*Wilfred paused to
allow a millipede
to pass, then
helped a dwarf
chameleon onto
a branch.*



low, sending dusty shafts through the branches. A fragrant muskiness leaked from the soil. I sensed the forest breathing, as though it were one enormous creature. I could feel it growing: all that upward yearning to reach the light of the canopy. This was a perfect, fully evolved system. It needed nothing more, nothing less.

Tortoise traffic

Still relishing the golden softness that settled over the forest, the next morning saw me heading west on the busy N2. I turned off between Sedgefield and Knysna, onto a lovely road that meanders beside the Goukamma River through vegetated dunes and down to the seaside village of Buffalo Bay. At the estuary, you reach Goukamma Nature Reserve. This delightful little reserve encompasses 2 500 hectares of coastal forest thick with milkwood, yellowwood and candlewood.

The chalets are spread out along the river, offering complete privacy. Three of them, including Forest Lodge where I stayed, are situated in Buffalo Valley, an adjacent CapeNature conservation area that overlooks the river. I checked into my timber lodge on stilts set in a stand of milkwoods. A bushbuck tripping daintily along the tree line provided my welcome. The lodge was comfortable and felt like a tree house perched among the branches with large skylights and a viewing deck with braai

The coastline dissolved into a sea mist, painted in pale watercolours. Mine were the only footprints.

above the tea-coloured Goukamma.

The trees were thronged with forest fowl. I glimpsed the scarlet flash of Knysna turaco wings, endured the cajoling of noisy drongos and an insistent white-eye tapping a bill at his reflection in my window. [See our article on shadow boxing on page 72 – Ed.] In the evenings, the cry of a fish eagle gave way to the call of a spotted eagle owl that serenaded me from a nearby branch with her melodious hu-hu-hooo.

There are six walking trails in Goukamma, ranging from four to 15 kilometres. I set off to hike the beach towards Platbank and returned along Groenvlei and the dunes. The estuary crossing is done in a blue rowing boat which has a rope system that allows you to pull yourself across the stream.

It was a moody, grey day and the coastline ahead of me dissolved into a sea mist, painted in pale watercolours. The full weight of the Indian Ocean pressed against the shore as blue pyramids detonated on the sand. A pair of African oystercatchers ▶

The chalets in Goukamma have the kind of views you'd like to wake up to.

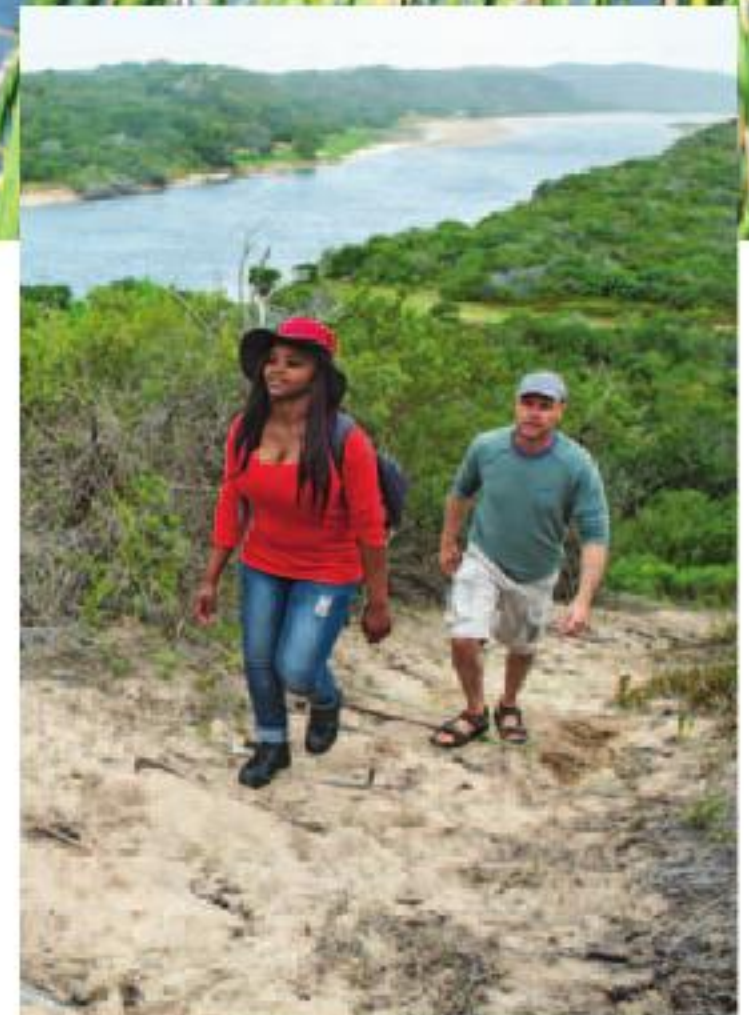


Forest Lodge looks out onto the Goukamma River.



A large leopard tortoise powers along the path, clearly in a hurry.

Goukamma has six hiking trails, so you can choose a river walk, beach stroll or forest amble.



tracked my progress, shrieking and swooping along the tide line. The beach was littered with stranded bluebottles and jellyfish that looked like marine shopping bags. Mine were the only footprints.

Cutting inland across the dunes, I came to tranquil Groenvlei where tortoise traffic jammed the paths. One enormous leopard tortoise bulldozed past me, obviously late for an appointment. I stopped at CapeNature's Mvubu Bush Camp with its spectacular views of the vlei, then started the

trek over the dunes back to my lodge.

Sitting near the mouth of the estuary that evening, I watched an angler cast his gossamer line, listened to the noisy bickering of Egyptian geese and the occasional splash of a fish disturbing mirrored water. It was utterly peaceful. This little reserve, so close to Knysna, yet still a relative secret, is a place of sea mist and lofty dunes, forest thickets and tranquil estuary. If I wasn't careful, I might lose myself completely in its magical embrace. 🐾

TRIP PLANNER



WHERE TO STAY

Comfortable, well-appointed chalets offer self-catering beside the estuary or at Groenvlei. Buffalo Valley: from R750 for one or two people, R100 an additional person a night. Goukamma: from R960 for one to four people a night. Contact: 021-483-0190, reservation.alert@capenature.co.za, www.capenature.co.za

WHAT TO DO

Hire canoes and pedalos, pack a picnic and find a shaded bank for lunch. If you're feeling energetic, paddle upriver for a restaurant lunch, then drift lazily back downstream on a full stomach.

The birding at the estuary and Groenvlei is well worth it, with more than 220 species recorded. Mountain-bike trails include a beach ride from Buffalo Bay to Brenton-on-Sea at low tide.

Fishing is popular both from shore and in the estuary. Permits are available from the post office in Sedgefield or Knysna. Goukamma has been declared a marine protected area to conserve reef fish such as red steenbras and black musselcracker. Catch and release is encouraged.

There's good snorkelling in the tidal pools. During the Christmas holiday season, Goukamma rangers offer reef walks at low tide from the Buffalo Bay Caravan Park, which is a great way for kids to learn about intertidal organisms.



WHERE TO STAY

Diepwalle Forest hosts 10 decks and a spotless ablution block. Rates start at R210 for one to two people. Bring your own food, bedding and tent, or hire a tent for an extra R150. Each deck can accommodate a three-person tent and has an electrical point. There's a tearoom on site. Contact: 044-302-5600, www.sanparks.co.za

WHAT TO DO

There are good walking and mountain-bike trails, bird watching and picnic sites. Visit the Forest Legends Museum at Diepwalle which gives the history of forest dwellers, especially woodcutters, as well as information on indigenous flora and fauna. Don't miss the elephant display. Walk with guide Meagan Vermaas who uses the novel *Circles in a Forest* by Dalene Matthee as inspiration (R200, 073-363-6522). Starting at the Matthee memorial, the walk follows the Jubilee Creek Trail. While in the area, visit Millwood, the gold-mining settlement that flourished briefly in the 19th century before being abandoned and swallowed by forest. James Haupt runs informative tours of the mines from Mother Holly's Tea Room (R100, R50 kids under 13, 074-228-4103).





Turn your holiday into a seaside retreat

This summer, why not treat yourself to a private hideaway at one of our coastal parks? There's loads to do, from hiking to snorkelling, and you'll have the beautiful scenery all to yourself.

BOOK YOUR ESCAPE NOW!

| Table Mountain National Park |



OLIFANTSBOS, Table Mountain National Park: from R3 080 per night for 4, sleeps max 12

LAGOON HOUSE, Agulhas National Park: from R2 750 per night for 6, sleeps max 8

JO ANNE'S BEACH COTTAGE, West Coast National Park: from R1 550 for 4, sleeps max 8

5% discount on online bookings: www.sanparks.org

| Reservations (012) 428 9111 or e-mail reservations@sanparks.org |





EYE IN THE SKY





Drones are capable of capturing breathtaking aerial footage, but do they have a role to play in capturing poachers or doing wildlife research? Conservationists weigh in on the question. **By Ilse Bigalke**



DEAN POLLEY

Previous page: Screen shots from a video recorded by drone in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. Right: Drones are remote-controlled aircraft with a range of uses, including the recording of aerial footage.



THE SCENE IS SUNRISE AT ROOIPUTS IN THE KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK. The video shows aerial views of one spectacular Rooiputs campsite after another. Two campers sitting on the roof of an A-frame structure wave in the direction of the camera. In the final scene, the sun sets on another beautiful day in the Kalahari.

Aerial footage used to be the preserve of filmmakers with mega budgets. But technological advances with drones have now put it within the reach of professional photographers and even keen amateurs. Drones are small, remote-controlled aircraft used for everything from warfare to counting livestock. Photographers and videographers favour quadcopters for their stability and manoeuvrability. Depending on its size, a drone can carry a small action camera or a full-sized DSLR.

Another Rooiputs camper was less impressed, posting this reaction to the intrusion by the quadcopter online: "As I approached the A-frame I heard this strange noise, almost like some bees. Imagine my surprise when I saw this strange object flying over the campsite."

The video was filmed on the Botswana side of the park by professional photographer Dean Polley. When Dean used a drone in the Kruger National Park in March 2014 to film Talamati bushveld camp, he came away with more than aerial

footage; he also received a R1 000 fine from park authorities.

SANParks has ruled drones a gadget too far and a look at the current rules and regulations confirms that the "use of drones inside (and over) our national parks is strictly prohibited". Dean was fined in terms of the National Environmental Management Protected Areas Act 57 of 2003, which prohibits the use of aircraft in a special nature reserve or national park.

According to Dean he had no idea there were regulations. "However, I agree that the use of drones should be restricted to serious projects and operators who pay the necessary fee. Whatever we do in the wild must have the least impact on its inhabitants."

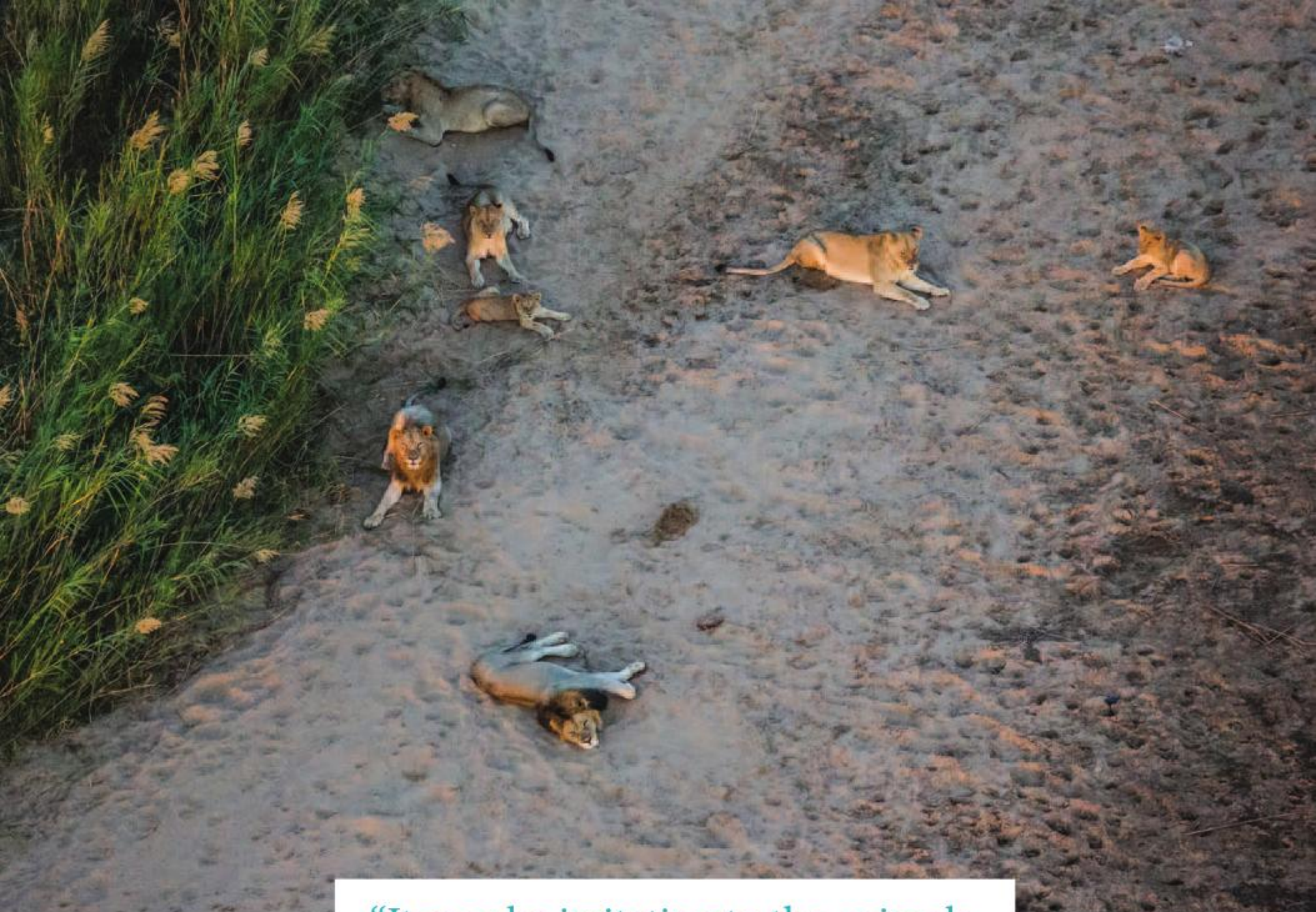
Ben van Eeden, tourism manager in the Kgalagadi, warned that drones will be confiscated and owners will have to go through a legal process to get them back. "Individuals who deploy their drones for their own enjoyment frustrate other paying visitors."

Any violations will be treated in a serious light and prosecuted, added SANParks' Chief of Staff: Special Projects, Ken Maggs, who says they will co-operate closely with the Civil Aviation Authority, the police and the military in this regard.

Matthew Schurch, a post-doctoral research fellow at the University of Cape Town who manages the Leopard Project in the Kgalagadi, voiced his concern regard-

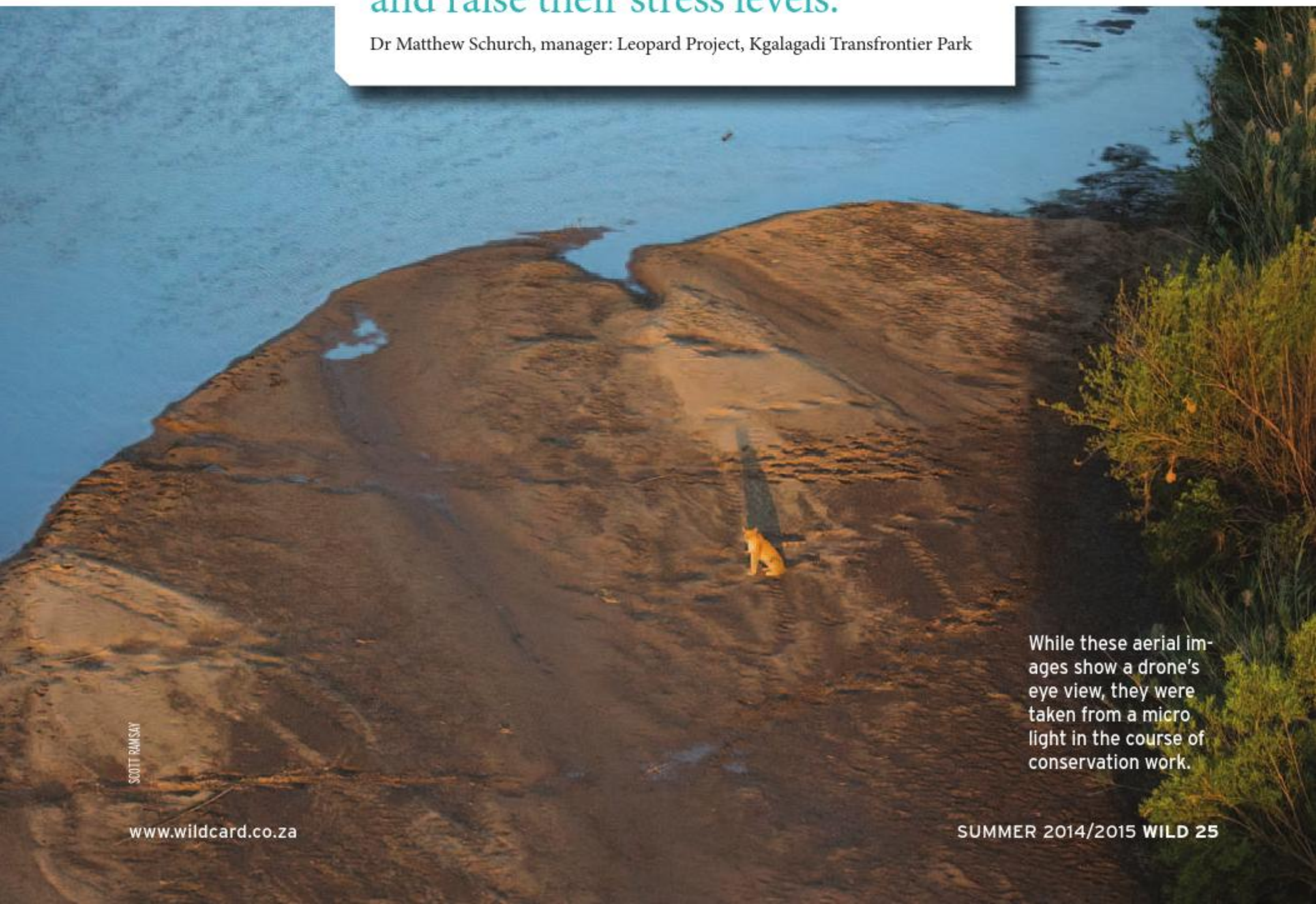
"I agree that the use of drones should be restricted to serious projects and operators who pay the necessary fee."

Dean Polley, professional photographer



“It may be irritating to the animals
and raise their stress levels.”

Dr Matthew Schurch, manager: Leopard Project, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park



While these aerial im-
ages show a drone's
eye view, they were
taken from a micro
light in the course of
conservation work.

Conservationists are exploring the use of drones for wildlife counts and anti-poaching measures.



“Drones have a limited flying range and it becomes technically impossible in an area of 20 000 km².”

Professor Rudi van Aarde, Chairman: Conservation Ecology Research Unit, University of Pretoria

ing other videos posted online in which animals are clearly disturbed by drones. “Users say it is not affecting animals, but it may be irritating to them and raise their stress levels.”

Referring to a video by a game ranger and guide “with 20 years’ experience” in which a drone crashed next to an elephant and disturbed a herd of baboons, Matthew commented that the baboons were forced out of an area where they were happy, safe and enjoying themselves. “Even people with 20 years’ experience don’t understand the impact.”

Despite the banning of drones for private use, SANParks has declared it will consider special requests for photography permits or the filming of commercial documentaries.

Anti-poaching tool

But if drones aren’t to be used for filming animals, might they still have a role to play in our national parks? Drones could be equipped with night-time and thermal-imaging cameras which can “see” poachers, even in the dark. The idea is to detect poachers before they strike, with the cameras providing GPS co-ordinates of their location.

Although much hype has been generated regarding the use of drones for anti-poaching purposes, Ken Maggs explained

that this tool is still very much in the infancy stages. Despite experimentation by SANParks, provincial parks, privately owned conservation areas and research institutions to detect criminal elements before a rhino is maimed or killed, no unmanned aerial vehicle solution has yet been found that would work in Kruger, the hotspot of rhino poaching in South Africa, said Johan Jooste, Commanding Officer: Special Projects, Kruger National Park.

He explained that although drones have been successfully deployed elsewhere in the world, Kruger poses unique challenges. Options have been evaluated with the help of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, but none of the systems could cope with the scale of the park, some 20 000 km² and the widespread, unpredictable pattern of poaching. Then there’s the fact that the iron stone mass of the Lebombo Mountains does not cool off enough at night to allow optical sensors to discern and pick up the heat of a human body, not to mention the failure of existing technology to penetrate the canopy of the predominantly thick bush vegetation.

Another hindrance is the huge cost factor of an advanced system, which will have to include a command centre, technical and operational staff, appropriate infrastructure and well-placed reaction forces.

Current technology is focused on sen-

“No unmanned aerial vehicle solution has yet been found that can work in Kruger, the hotspot of rhino poaching in South Africa.”

Johan Jooste, Commanding Officer:
Special Projects, Kruger National Park.

sors that can ensure surveillance, detection and early warning in the unique Kruger conditions. Once these are finalised, the idea is to ask industry to integrate it into a drone.

Rudi van Aarde, chairman of the Conservation Ecology Research Unit at the University of Pretoria, commented: “Although drone technology has advanced rapidly and its potential application in conjunction with other solutions to apply pressure on poachers is there, the marketing value of drone versus poacher is still a rumour.”

Regarding reported successes by Peace Parks Foundation in scaring off poachers by using drones in KwaZulu-Natal reserves, Rudi said that although no poaching took place during the 10 months in which the drones were deployed, the experiment was not conducted scientifically and it was therefore impossible to determine whether poaching would have occurred in the absence of the drones.

In an era where poachers are equipped with militia-type equipment, game rangers might long for a hi-tech solution that could identify trouble before it happens. A modern version of Harry Wolhuter patrolling the park on horseback. Thanks to rapid advances in drone technology there is little doubt something will emerge to become an integral part of anti-poaching solutions, but it remains to be seen to what extent and how soon conservationists’ dream of an eye in the sky will become an effective reality. 🐾



DRONES FOR WILDLIFE RESEARCH

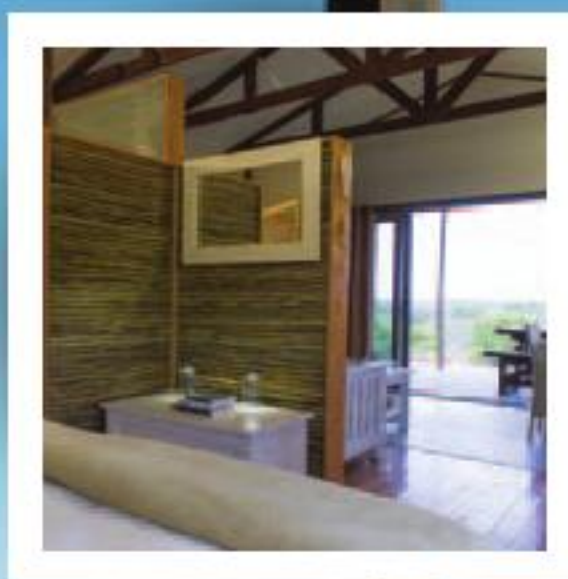
The jury is still out

The development of drone technology for scientific purposes is in a very early, sensitive stage and it is impossible to say if it will eventually be successful.

Rudi van Aarde, Chairman of the Conservation Ecology Research Unit at the University of Pretoria, has been involved in a study in the Kruger National Park to investigate the feasibility of photographing elephants from a drone, since using helicopters is very expensive. He hoped the aerial images could be used to determine elephant populations by extrapolating size measurements to age, so that the size of future populations could be predicted.

“We need multiple images to measure the animals. If an individual animal moves even slightly, there is no image and elephants do not stand still. A lot of detail can be seen from the air, but the scale is very limited. Drones have a limited flying range and it becomes technically impossible in an area of 20 000 km². Although there are no answers as yet, a lot of development is taking place and a lot of money is being invested to adapt the technology for scientific purposes.”

Matthew Schurch, manager of the Leopard Project in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, reckons drones could play a useful scientific role. They are, for instance, being used for a monthly count of the breeding kelp gulls at the Robberg Nature Reserve in Plettenberg Bay. “It will, however, have to be judged on a case-by-case basis. For instance, drones don’t have the necessary range for Kruger, but Robberg is considerably smaller.”



From left: A heron patrols the pan; the inviting interior of Rocherpan's eco-cabins; reserve manager Adrian Fortuin and tourism officer Wynona Didloft.

The eco-cabins at Rocherpan Nature Reserve are proving so popular with birders and those looking for a peaceful chill spot on the West Coast that CapeNature is building more.

By Marion Whitehead

Photos Cheryl-Samantha Owen

DOUBLE ACT



The self-catering cabins' outer walls are of corrugated iron, like the former farm cottages they replaced, and are painted an elegant dove-grey.



AS DUSK PULLS ITS ORANGE BLANKET ACROSS THE SKY at Rocherpan, the racket from the weavers roosting for the night in the dense reedbed reaches a crescendo. A row of Cape shovelers fly over, honking, and more flamingos glide in, their bodies strange bumps in the middle of what look like flying sticks, pumping the air effortlessly with their big wings. They land gracefully and tuck their long necks under a wing, standing on one pink leg to doze and dream of the delicacies that await them the next day.

It's very satisfying to end the day in such company and we also think about roosting for the night. The four eco-cabins at Rocherpan, a magical spot 25 kilometres north of Velddrif on the West Coast, are all named after birds and are a wonderful example of low-impact luxury, with an excellent mix of style and practicality. We debate whether to light a fire in the braai place on the deck or inside in the fireplace. In the end, the weather decides for us and we go for the cosy indoor option.

Tastefully furnished in line with modern reserve standards, the colours are light and fresh. Together with good cotton bed linen, this makes it a great place to snuggle up for a good night's rest.

Joy of joys: a set of bird, plant and reptile

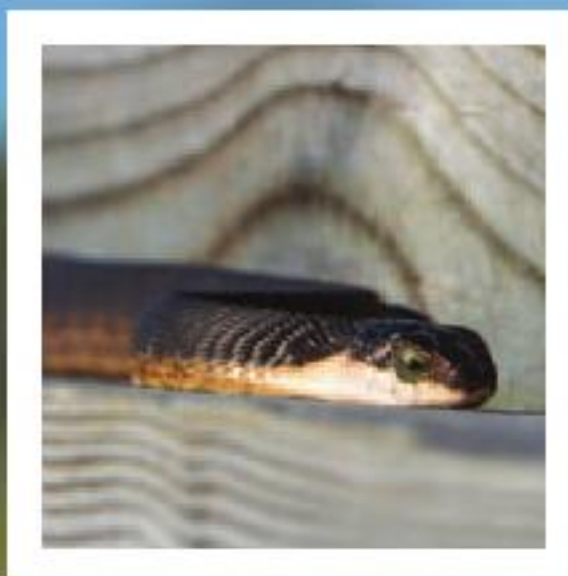
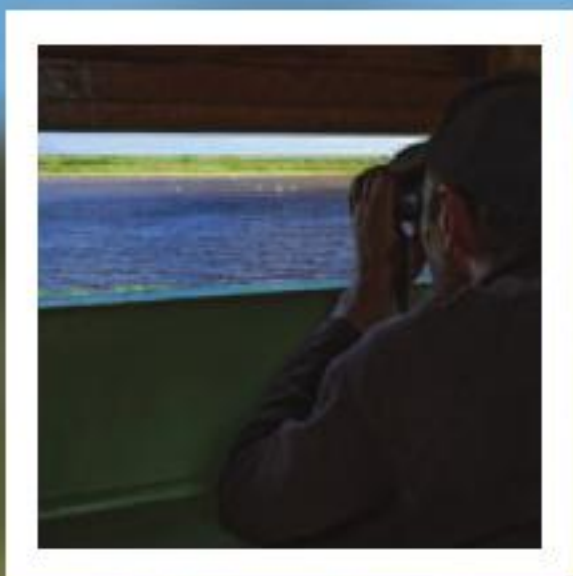
guide books for the area are thoughtfully provided. "It helps non-birders get into birding," said reserve manager Adrian Fortuin when he and Wynona Didloft, tourism liaison officer, popped in to check we were comfortable in our eco-cabin.

We got chatting about developments in the 930-hectare park and Adrian said the eco-cabins were designed to minimise impact on the environment. They're set well back from the water and are built on the footprint of former farm labourers' cottages. "We must lead by example. We can't set down regulations for responsible development on this coast if we don't comply ourselves," explained Adrian.

The four eco-cabins are proving so popular that CapeNature is building four more, due to be completed by May 2015. "These are going to be family-sized ones, with two bedrooms each," said Adrian.

He's been the reserve's conservation manager for only a few months and is also responsible for Bird Island, offshore from Lambert's Bay. Before moving to the West Coast, he was involved with setting up the recently declared Knersvlakte Nature Reserve and previously worked for SAN-Parks at all three sections of the Garden Route National Park.

It was only after chatting for a while that I found out he and Wynona were recently



From left: The bird hide overlooks the pan; keep an eye out for snakes in summer months; tortoises enjoy right of way.



SPECIAL TICKS

"Birds are our main attraction at Rocherpan," said reserve manager Adrian Fortuin. No wonder, the terrestrial, vlei and marine habitats offer opportunities to spot 238 species, of which 85 are waterbirds, including an abundance of migrant waders.

Black harrier is the mega tick. Specials include Cape shoveler, which also breed here, black-crowned night heron, African swamp hen and moorhen.

White pelicans and greater and lesser flamingos, all listed in the Red Data book of endangered species, are resident from July to December.



married. It's a great match, as both are keen bird watchers and amateur photographers, and happily share tips with visitors. They met when they both worked in the Garden Route. Adrian was interning in the Tsitsikamma section after completing a BSc in botany and zoology and a national diploma in nature conservation.

"My passion for conservation was awakened when, as a grade six learner, I spent a weekend at the Goldfields Education Centre at Cape Point," said Adrian. "I lost my way a bit and nearly studied chemical engineering, but sanity finally prevailed during orientation week at university."

Wynona's path was through the hospitality industry. She put her international diploma in hotel management to good use at the Fernery in the Tsitsikamma area, where she co-ordinated Dolphin Trail activities. "My holiday volunteering spells while visiting Adrian at the Knysna section of the Garden Route National Park broadened my understanding of the interface between these two industries," she said. "Taking this position with Cape-Nature was the next logical step."

Previously she followed Adrian when he moved jobs, but this time he moved to Rocherpan to be with her and they're clearly a couple going places in conservation, driven by their passion for nature.

With all the eco-cabins' green credentials, I'd expected solar-powered lights, but there was electricity for everything from the microwave oven to the kettle in the well-equipped kitchen. "The Eskom line was already here, so it was easier to hook into it," explained Adrian.

However, the water supply comes from rain harvested from the roof and solar geysers heat the water. "The reserve is off the municipal water grid and, through its rainwater harvesting system and eco-toilets, tries to reduce its general water consumption," said Adrian.

Their environmentally friendly, water-

less composting or eco-toilets not only save scarce water, they don't pollute the water table as the old, long-drop pit latrines do. Apart from having no cistern, they look like normal toilets. We found they weren't smelly at all and were easy to use. We happily dumped a spoonful of dry bark and twigs from the bucket of material supplied onto our deposits.

"The pile is raked out every week and there's a solar-powered fan in the ventilation shaft, the size of one in your desktop computer, to ensure air circulation," said Adrian. "Together with the heat and lime we add, whatever is deposited dries out very quickly. Visitors have completely bought into the idea of eco-loos."

More than birds

Soaking up early sunshine on the deck the next morning with coffee and rusks, we watched a tiny, iridescent southern double-collared sunbird flit past the yellow flowers of a bitou bush to perch on a protea. On the drive to the bird hides on the western side of the pan, we spotted five tortoises, plus the world's largest flightless bird, a lone ostrich casually nibbling some greenery. The two hides are normally on the edge of the 110-hectare shallow pan, which can stretch for up to six kilometres, but by the end of a long dry summer there is more mud than water.

Before it became a nature reserve in 1966, Rocherpan had been in the Rocher family since 1839. Farmer Pierre Rocher had his workers close off the mouth of the Papkuils River to improve summer grazing for his livestock, forcing it to flow behind the dunes that separate the sandveld from the sea. This created a seasonal wetland, perfect for waterbirds. Recognising the conservation value of the land, the Rochers donated their farm for a reserve. Gideon Rocher, a fifth-generation member of the Rocher clan, sits on the advisory committee and visits often, driv- ►



The view across
Rocherpan to
the mountains
in the distance.

The trail wanders inland through shoulder-high strandveld
good for spotting a variety of canaries and larks.

You can mountain bike
along the jeep tracks.





Hike to the lookout point for whale sightings and then stroll back along the beach.

ing over from Aurora where he now lives.

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges facing conservation in this country and “will have some dire consequences, especially along the West Coast of South Africa”, cautioned Adrian. One of the innovative ways CapeNature is looking to meet this challenge and preserve biodiversity is to increase the province’s conservation footprint. “The reserve is currently investigating stewardship agreements with neighbouring landowners,” he added.

Exploring the reserve’s coastline, which is now a marine protected area, a surprise awaited us at the lookout picnic spot on the dune above the beach: whales! There were three groups of southern rights frolicking and feeding in the sea, moving slowly up the coast in a barely discernible leviathan rhythm. Bottle-nosed dolphins are also frequent visitors, but we saw only African

black oystercatchers and kelp gulls looking for tidbits on the endless, unspoiled beach.

Then the gannets arrived. A huge flock, systematically circling a shoal of fish, swooping, diving, flying so effortlessly I wondered why I was still earthbound.

But there’s more to Rocherpan than birding. The coastal hiking trail meanders for seven kilometres along the beach, and you can stop for a swim in the ocean and a picnic. The second trail wanders inland for eight kilometres, across a boardwalk and through shoulder-high strandveld good for spotting a variety of canaries and larks. It skirts inland away from the pan to avoid disturbing the nesting site of a pair of black harriers, one of the world’s rarest raptors.

Next on Rocherpan’s wish list is an additional bird hide close to where the cottages are located. “We’re getting there. Watch this space!” vowed Adrian. 🐾



Rocherpan lies two and a half hours north of Cape Town.

TRIP PLANNER

Getting there Rocherpan lies 25 km north of Velddrif. Take the N7 from Cape Town and turn onto the R399 before Piketberg to reach the coast.

Accommodation The self-catering cottages have a double bed as well as a futon for children. Off-peak rate R850 a night for one to two people, peak rate R1050. R100 an extra person a night.

Bookings CapeNature Central Reservations 021-483-0190, reservation.alert@capenature.co.za, www.capenature.co.za

Go Wild!
Join the

Wild CLUB

explore | conserve | enjoy



* **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**
Update your postal details
online to ensure you get *Wild*
magazine in the post.



Join our community today

Wild Card® members are passionate about our protected areas. To enjoy a year's access to the *Wild Card* parks and reserves, plus receive your complimentary copies of *Wild*™ magazine, purchase or renew your *Wild Card* now.

www.wildcard.co.za | wildcard@sanparks.org
0861 GO WILD (0861 46 9453)

CLUSTER OPTIONS

ALL PARKS CLUSTER

Individual	R435
Couple*	R710
Family*	R870

EKZN WILDLIFE CLUSTER

Individual	R430
Couple*	R700
Family*	R840

SANPARKS CLUSTER

Individual	R425
Couple*	R690
Family*	R830

CAPENATURE CLUSTER

Individual	R385
Couple*	R625
Family*	R755

MSINSI CLUSTER

Individual	R385
Couple*	R630
Family*	R750

SWAZILAND BIG GAME PARKS CLUSTER

Individual	R315
Couple*	R510
Family*	R620

INTERNATIONAL VISITORS

ALL PARKS CLUSTER:

Individual R1770 | Couple* R2770
Family* R3310

*Couple: Two adults or one adult and one child.

*Family: Up to two adults and their five children under the age of 18, or one adult and six children (both South Africans and international visitors). Proof of identity, nationality and residency will be required when entering any park, reserve or resort. Prices subject to change without notice.

PRICES VALID UNTIL 31 OCTOBER 2015

THE MARTIAL
EAGLE IS IN
TROUBLE,
WITH POPULATIONS
IN DECLINE ACROSS
AFRICA FOR REASONS
THAT ARE UNCLEAR. IN
THE KRUGER NATIONAL
PARK, SCIENTISTS ARE
WORKING HARD TO
SOLVE THE MYSTERY.
BY ARJUN AMAR

COUNTDOWN



FACT FILE

Martial eagle
Polemaetus bellicosus

CONSERVATION STATUS
Near threatened

DISTRIBUTION
Africa south of Sahara

COLOUR
Dark brown and white

LENGTH
78-83cm

WINGSPAN
1.9-2.6m

WEIGHT
3-6kg

LIFE EXPECTANCY
14 years

The martial is Africa's largest eagle and one of its most deadly avian predators, capable of killing and eating small antelopes and monkeys. It is a defining species of the African savanna, functioning as a vital apex predator but, unfortunately, its status was recently changed to vulnerable globally as the species appears to be in trouble.





EAGLE-EYED
The bird's keen vision can spot prey over a kilometre away.

Data from the South African Bird Atlas Project, a national citizen science project, suggests overall numbers of martial eagles have fallen 60 per cent across the country. The likelihood of seeing one on any given day has declined by over half in the last 20 years. Although declines within protected areas have been less severe, the data suggests martial eagle numbers in these areas have fallen by 40 per cent.

Large declines have occurred in three of the country's biggest protected areas: the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Hluhluwe-iMfolozi Park and, perhaps most worrying of all, within the Kruger National Park. Kruger has long been considered the species' stronghold in South Africa and was thought to support between 100 and 200 pairs.

The declines inferred from Atlas data have been confirmed by dedicated monitoring of martial eagle nest sites. Surveys of nesting raptors in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park by the Endangered Wildlife Trust showed that numbers of martial eagles nesting along the park's rivers have fallen from 16 pairs in the early 1990s to only nine pairs now.

Identifying these declines is one thing, understanding why they are occurring is another. However, it is vitally important we do so in order for effective conservation actions to be developed to reverse these trends. So what might be responsible for these declines? One worrying possibility is that even the largest parks might not be big enough to protect all the life stages of a species with such wide-ranging habits as the martial eagle.

Being a large, long-lived raptor, the martial eagle takes over six years to reach sexual maturity. During this long period, juvenile and sub-adult birds have to survive and mature, presumably without the benefit of a fixed territory

or a mate. Despite its wide range, little is known about the species' natural history, especially during these early life stages. We have almost no knowledge about how the juveniles disperse and what they get up to before breeding.

After fledging, juveniles disperse from their parents' territory and either live nomadic lives or establish their own territories in areas which are suboptimal for breeding. During this time we don't know whether their behaviours expose them to risks outside of protected areas. For example, it may be that dispersing young are threatened with persecution by farmers who fear the eagle will hunt their livestock, or they may be exposed to electrocution and collision with an ever-increasing network of power distribution lines.

To test these ideas, Rowen van Eeden has been doing a PhD study tracking martial eagles in the Kruger National Park. Juvenile birds have been equipped with GPS tracking units that weigh 70 g, a tiny fraction of the weight of this huge species that can easily reach 5,5 kg. Tags are attached with a harness made of Teflon ribbon, the same material that coats non-stick pans. The tags record each bird's location every 15 minutes with an accuracy of about 10 metres. Every so often these readings are uploaded through the cellphone network and then appear instantly on his computer.

The tracking data shows that juveniles fledged in Kruger disperse out of the park, spending only about 40 per cent of their time in protected areas. This is worrying since the levels of threats will inevitably be higher in locations outside protected areas.

"We have also tracked adults holding territories in the park, which confirm the birds have huge territories," says Rowen. "At around 110 square kilometres, their territories are several times larger than those of a leopard, and equal the



GURU Dr Arjun Amar is senior lecturer at the Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology at the University of Cape Town.



ALBERT FROMMANN

Powerful talons enable martial eagles to take down prey as large as duikers.

We have almost no knowledge about how juvenile martial eagles disperse and what they get up to before breeding.



Doctoral student Rowen van Eeden measures martial eagles in Kruger.

Adults occasionally abandon their territories, moving large distances and ranging outside of the park.



BRIDGES BY NARRATIVE



KGALAGADI TRANSFRONTIER PARK



JUVENILES BORN IN KRUGER SPEND 40% OF THEIR TIME IN THE PARK

KRUGER COULD SUPPORT 170 BREEDING PAIRS OF MARTIAL EAGLES

Martial eagle territories equal the home range size of many lion prides.

home range size of many lion prides. From these measures we estimate that if the entire habitat within Kruger were suitable, the park could support up to 170 pairs of breeding martial eagles. Hopefully this estimate will be further refined as our research continues.

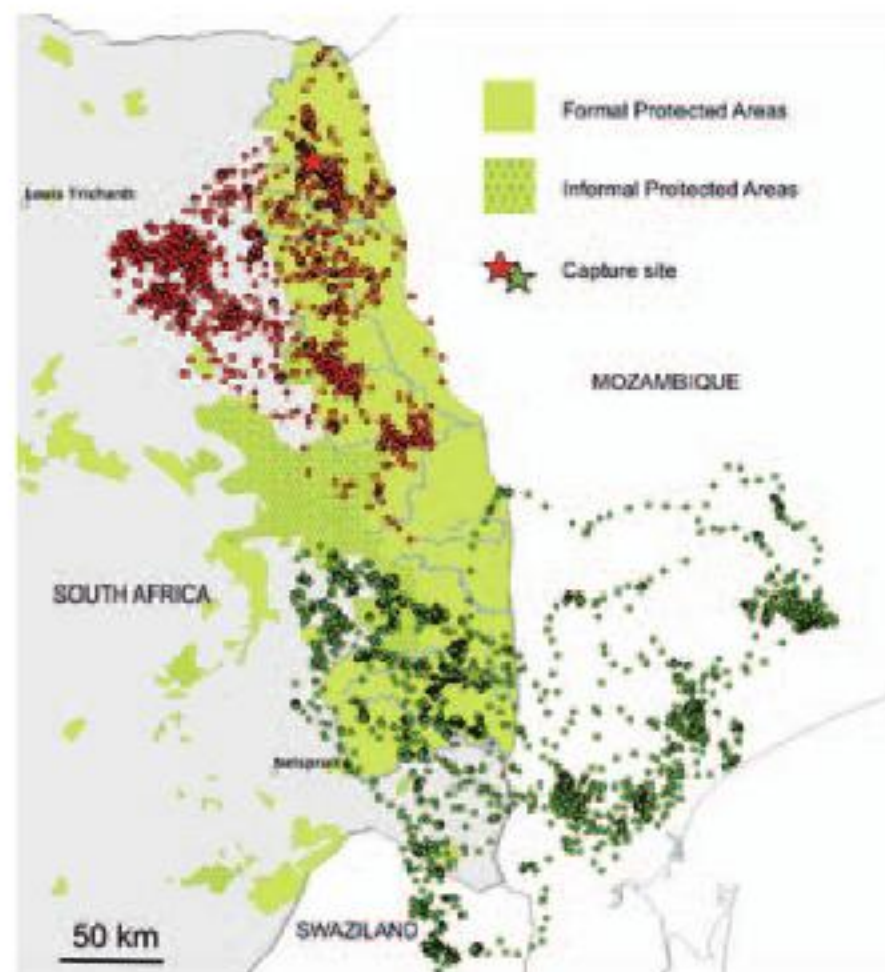
“Neighbouring pairs almost never encroach on each other’s territories. However, we were surprised to find that not all our adults behave in this way,” admits Rowen. A few adults occasionally abandon their territories, moving large distances and ranging outside of the park. Two adult birds are known to have died during these wanderings.

One eagle was most likely poached in a rural area of central Mozambique. “We managed to recover the tag, which had been cut off the bird and hung in a tree used as the gathering spot for community elders,” says Rowen. The other bird travelled south into Swaziland, where its signal suddenly failed. “Unfortunately,

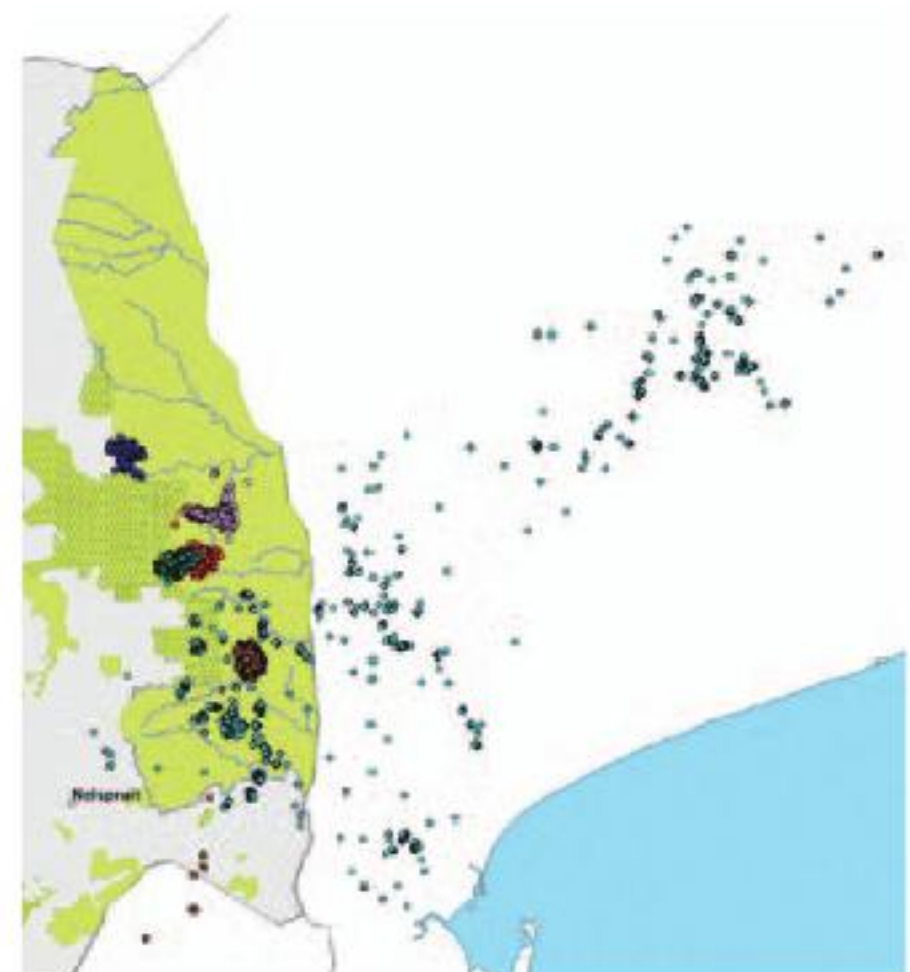
we did not manage to recover either the tag or the bird, but a trip to the area revealed that the location of this failure was right next to a newly installed electrical distribution box, and we suspect that the bird was electrocuted.” Many communities in both Swaziland and in rural South Africa are undergoing electrification and while this will clearly transform the lives of these people, it does also pose a threat to wildlife, particularly large raptors.

If parks even the size of Kruger are not sufficiently large to protect wide-ranging species such as martial eagles from the forces that operate outside them, we will struggle to conserve these charismatic top predators. Information from the tracking units will hopefully identify the key factors which pose the most significant threats to individuals ranging outside of the park. Only if we tackle these threats can we hope to keep these species in our wider countryside. 🐾

 www.facebook.com/martialeagleconservation



Map showing the GPS locations of two dispersing juvenile martial eagles together with the outline of Kruger and other protected areas. Both birds spent only around 40 per cent of their time inside of parks, which means they are more exposed to potential threats.



Map showing the GPS locations of adult birds. The map clearly demonstrates the territorial nature of this species, with almost no overlap between the birds. It also shows that two of the birds ventured far into neighbouring areas.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Report sightings to martialeaglesightings@gmail.com. In Kruger, keep a lookout for colour rings on martial eagles and, ideally, take a photo.



NIKON D3S, 200-400mm f4,
f8, 1/2000 sec, ISO 640





SPLIT SECOND

The bush is no dress rehearsal. The best wildlife photographers are always ready, camera on motor drive, for an all-time dramatic encounter between predator and prey. These are shots I wish I'd bagged.
By Romi Boom

| GREG DU TOIT |

BOOMSLANG ATTACK

Bouncing along in our 4x4, our local guide spotted a boomslang. Usually found in trees, these snakes are very shy, but this one reared up boldly in the grass. Its calculating gaze was fixed not on us, but on a flap-neck chameleon that had also descended from its leafy abode and was slowly creeping along the ground in front of the snake. Perhaps the chameleon had descended to lay eggs or to merely swap trees but, whatever the reason, it had now lost its secret weapon of green camouflage and was in considerable danger. The boomslang is one of the most toxic snakes on the continent and, despite the chameleon putting up a brave fight, it slid off victorious, with more than a slight bulge in its abdomen.

Nikon D3, 500mm f4,
f7.1, 1/4000 sec, ISO 800

| ALBIE VENTER |

FAST FOOD

Predators are ever opportunistic and whenever a chance presents itself for an easy meal, they will capitalise on it. Many prey animals can put up a serious fight and its not uncommon for cheetahs to suffer serious injury at the horns and hoofs of potential prey. Newborn babies, such as this impala, offer a ready snack to two young cheetah brothers who are unable to exploit mom's hunting prowess any longer. The two newly independent animals will initially have a difficult time capturing their own prey and will even adapt their hunting strategy to scouring bushes in the hope of flushing animals such as scrub hares. Impala are more conventional prey and offer an easier target to hone their high speed hunting skills.



Perfect timing is as
crucial for the predator
as for the photographer.



| LEE SLABBER |

LIFE'S LESSONS

Having found a Cape fox den in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, I returned each morning and spent many hours photographing their activities. On my last morning I was gifted with this sighting. The dad had gone hunting and returned with two whistling rats which he dropped in front of the pup. So the lesson began, where the pup would continuously stalk and throw the stunned rat into the air, learning valuable life skills and leaving me with a great photographic opportunity.



Canon EOS-1D X, Canon EF 600mm f4L IS, f7.1, 1/4 000 sec, ISO 500

Nikon D700, 70-200mm f2.8,
f2.8, 1/1000 sec, ISO 200

| SHANE SAUNDERS |

HEARTBREAK

During our annual trip to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, we were on an early-morning drive down the Auob River, a little north of Dalkeith waterhole, when we came across this young male lion harassing a honey badger and her baby. After the mother's long and desperate struggle to protect herself and her youngster, the lion managed to break the mother's back. She eventually dragged herself off into a nearby bush. The lion returned to the baby hiding among the branches of a fallen kameeldoring. This image summarises the event that followed. Although this sighting may have been difficult to witness and very rarely seen, we do appreciate we had the chance of a lifetime. The lion did not manage to escape injury. The mother badger injured the lion's back paw, leaving half of it bloody.





Canon EOS 7D,
EF500mm f4L IS USM,
f4, 1/4000 sec, ISO 400



| RUDI VAN DEN HEEVER |

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

One of the biggest spectacles at Cubitje Quap waterhole in the Kgalagadi Trans-frontier Park is the thousands of Cape turtle doves that crowd the trees around the waterhole while others drink their fill. My plan was to capture a lanner falcon catching a dove in flight and if I got lucky, shortly before or after it had hit one of the doves. My patience paid dividends. I only heard the muffled, but definite sound of a hit and found the lanner with its kill already on the ground. Later almost nothing but a few feathers of the dove was left and the falcon was cleaning its talons, when there was a sudden commotion in my view finder. I instinctively pressed the shutter – after only seven frames, less than a second, it was all over. I looked up and saw a southern pale chanting goshawk disappear behind the trees. I frantically pressed the review button on my camera and was pleasantly surprised with what luck had captured.

**To seize the moment
demands focus,
concentration and
lightning-fast reflexes.**

■ ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR

Canon 1DX, 70-200mm f2.8 IS,
f6.3, 1/1600 sec, ISO 400





| DAVID "BAZ" JENKINS |

BREAKTHROUGH

Steadying the camera can be difficult, especially on a windy day, but this day it was calm seas and no wind. I shot out of hand as it is too awkward to use a tripod on the boat while it rocks on the waves. Since a breach can happen anywhere in the 360 degrees around the boat, you have to be able to adjust really quickly. When the great white shark breaches, it is almost always over in less than a second. It is important to get a fast shutter speed of about 1/1000 of a second to freeze the action. This is not always possible as a lot of the action happens just before and after sunrise. Luckily on this occasion I had plenty of light and was able to get a fast enough shutter speed and a good depth of field.

**When the action
explodes, time
is measured in
milliseconds.**

Nikon D700, 300mm f2.8,
1/8000 sec, ISO 250



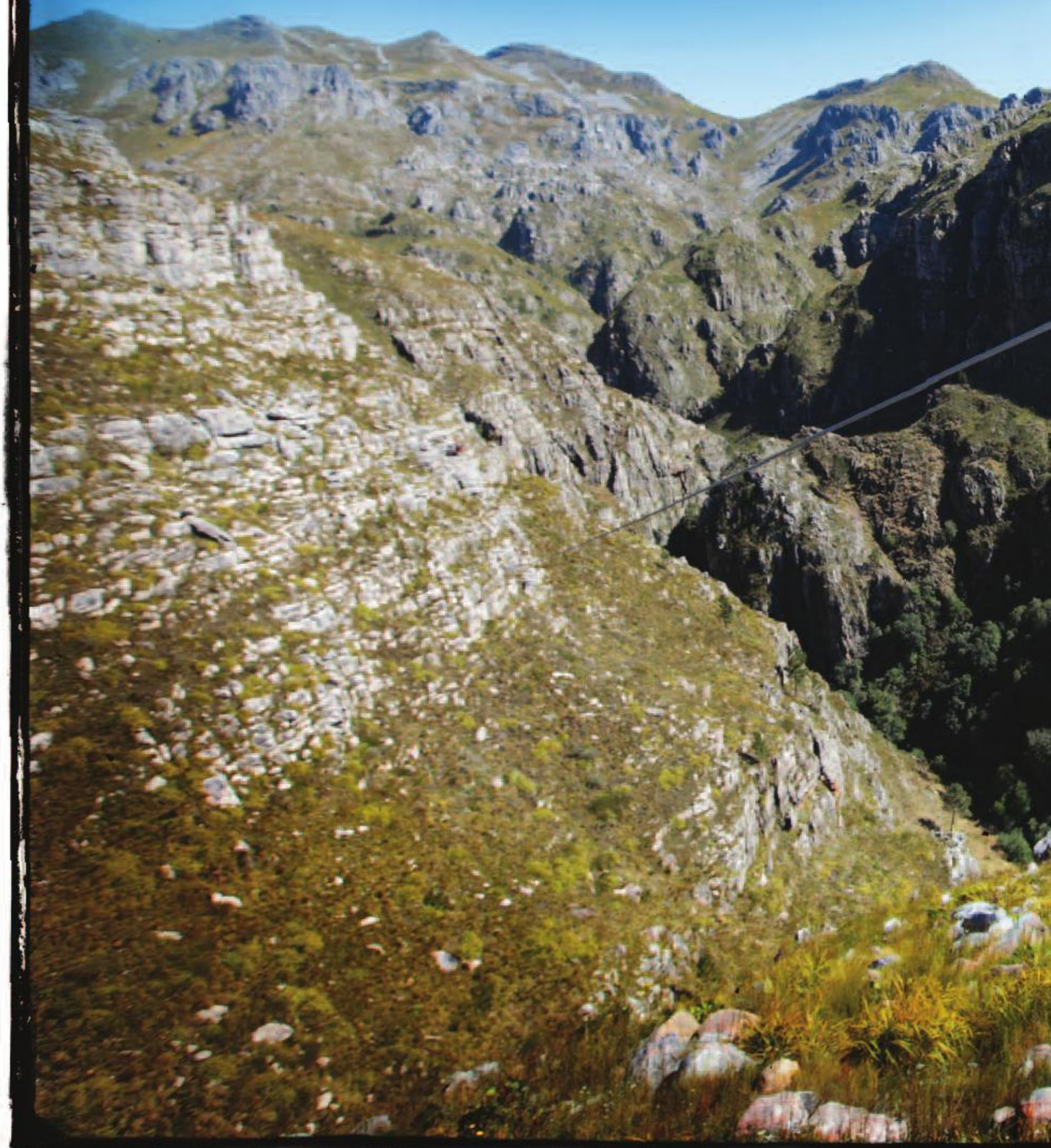
THREE'S A CROWD

During my time in the Kalahari I realised that whatever the time, you should always be ready for anything to happen. Arriving back in camp around eleven one morning, I noticed a yellow mongoose fighting with something under a bush. When I moved closer, it transpired that a yellow cobra and the mongoose were fighting for their lives, but as soon as the mongoose got hold of the cobra's head, it was all over. A ground squirrel came to investigate. Sometimes ground squirrels, especially in the dry season, can turn to carnivorism to get the required protein and survive the drought. The mongoose aggressively protected its catch and disappeared down its burrow to enjoy a hard-won meal. 🐾



The adrenalin rush of sudden death is always possible in the wild, even when you least expect it.

HIGH ON LIFE





The latest attraction at Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve offers a bird's eye view of hidden places. The adrenalin rush is a bonus.
By Fiona McIntosh
Photos Shaen Adey

CAPE CANOPY TOUR LEADER RICARDO JURIES beamed as he set the scene. “Once we’ve done the briefing and kitted you up, we’re going on a 4x4 journey into the heart of the

Cape Floral Kingdom, a Unesco World Heritage Site. You’ll be going to the upper reaches of the Riviersonderend Gorge, to a place few others have ever seen.”

His enthusiasm is infectious. As he explained how a series of ziplines would carry us safely from platform to platform high above the gorge, his sense of pride and wonder was palpable. He has every right to be proud.

This newly opened canopy tour in the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve, in partnership with CapeNature, offers a unique way to enjoy a previously inaccessible area without having an impact on the environment.

The ride up, on a steep stony path to the top of the mountain, was fabulous. Wonderful pink erica clothed the slopes, little sugarbirds flitted from protea to protea and, as we gained height, we could see right down the tannin-stained river and across the reserve to the Elgin Valley.

Half an hour later we were disgorged from the vehicle and led to the first platform where Ricardo secured us to a safety rail. “Vicky will go first,” he explained. “Once she’s set up the safety braking system I’ll clip you in and send you over one by one. It’s easy, just sit in your harness, relax and enjoy the view. You can control your speed by pressing down on the cable with your gloved hand.”

I volunteered to go next and stepped up onto the launch pad as Ricardo clipped in the safety lines and attached the pulley that would run along the cable. “This is a fairly slow slide. You shouldn’t need to brake, but Vicky will signal whether she

wants you to go faster or slower as you approach. If you don’t make it all the way across you can always turn round and pull yourself to the platform.”

The radio cackled. Ricardo gave me a thumbs up and I gingerly stepped into the void. “Wheeeeeee!” It was exhilarating stuff and I managed to control my speed so as to land gently on the platform. As I watched the others coming across I had time to take in the surroundings, the incredible weathered rock formations, the dripping moss, the tiny flowers in the crevices of the sheer cliff on which the wooden platform is secured and the little lizards sunning themselves on the rock.

“Did you know that the Hottentots Holland mountains are home to the only known population of the endemic dwarf crag lizard?” Ricardo asked. “I’ll tell you if I see one.”

It’s a slick operation. As soon as Vicky arrived at the platform she squeezed past us on an independent safety line and clipped in for the next slide. Confident after the first run, we quickly followed as soon as she radioed in.

The Cape Canopy Tour is the latest addition to the canopy tour brand, which already has operations in Tsitsikamma, Magaliesberg, Karkloof, Drakensberg, Magoebaskloof and Swaziland’s Malolotja Reserve. In this case the term ‘canopy tour’ is a misnomer as the slides are all out in the open, but all seven canopy tours are designed to showcase the natural environment of their particular locations.

The first, in the indigenous forest of Tsitsikamma, opened in 2001. It was the brainchild of Mark Brown, a civil engineer who had been involved in constructing similar cable slides in Costa Rica to allow scientists to go about their work in the otherwise inaccessible treetops.

“The construction of the Cape Canopy Tour was a huge task that took about nine months,” said co-owner Ryan Lark- ▶

“The ride up, on a steep stony path to the top of the mountain, is fabulous.”

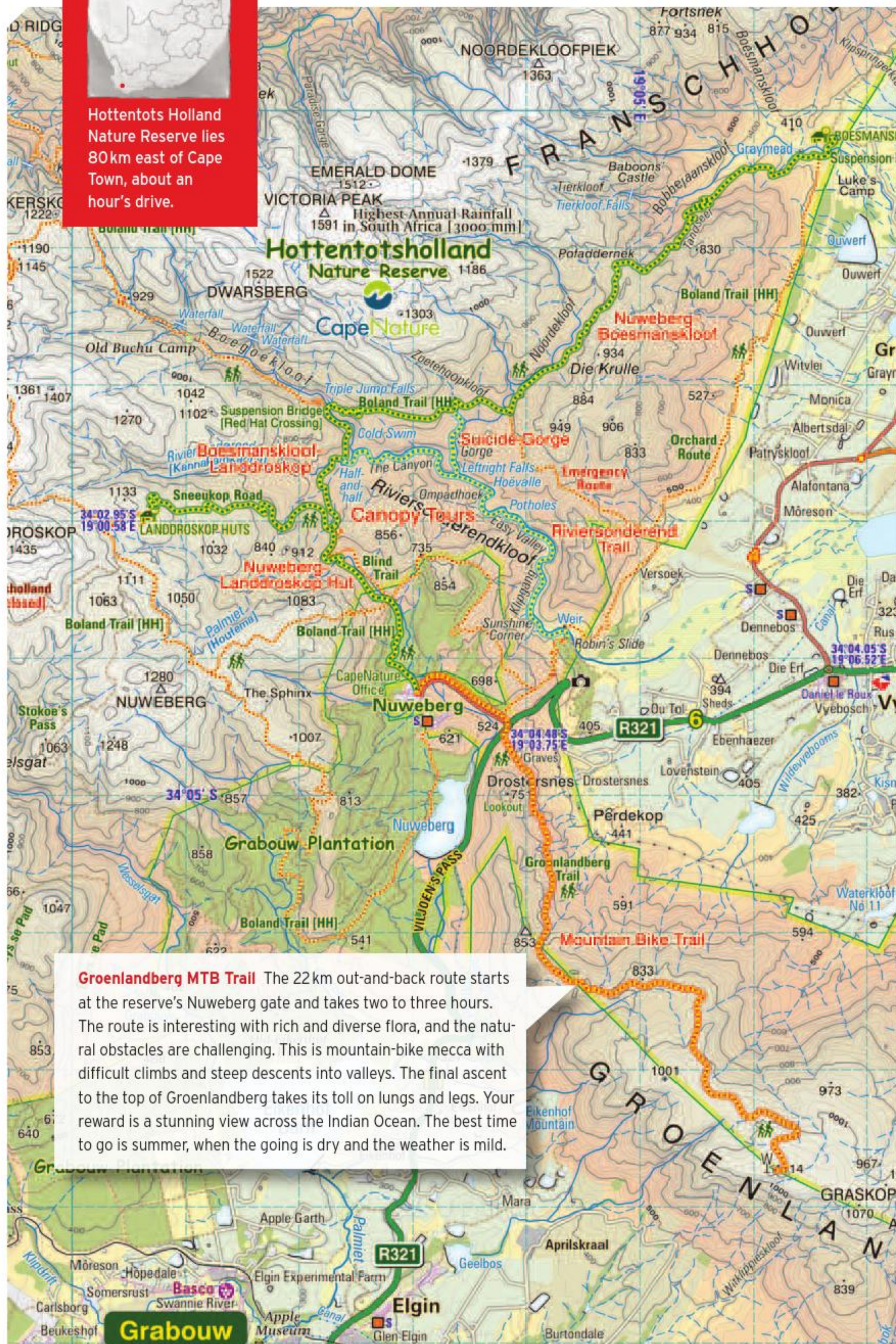


THE HEART OF THE CAPE FLORAL KINGDOM

The extremely diverse topography of the Boland complex makes it home to some of the richest flora in the world. Approximately 1300 species of fynbos occur within the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve. The area is a hot-spot both on account of this diversity and the high level of endemism (plants that occur nowhere else).



Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve lies 80km east of Cape Town, about an hour's drive.



Groenlandberg MTB Trail The 22 km out-and-back route starts at the reserve's Nuweberg gate and takes two to three hours. The route is interesting with rich and diverse flora, and the natural obstacles are challenging. This is mountain-bike mecca with difficult climbs and steep descents into valleys. The final ascent to the top of Groenlandberg takes its toll on lungs and legs. Your reward is a stunning view across the Indian Ocean. The best time to go is summer, when the going is dry and the weather is mild.

CARTOGRAPHY BY PETER SLINGSBY ©2014 FROM 'CAPE WINELANDS' - THE MAP - SEE WWW.SLINGSBYMAPS.COM

man. "Every cable was pulled across the valley by a team of local guys. Once each cable was secured, that line was used to transport the wood and other materials needed to construct the subsequent platforms and lines. We basically built as we went."

In August 2014, all 11 slides and 13 platforms were in place and the first guests were treated to a bird's eye view of Hottentots Holland.

As we reached the fourth slide Ricardo said, "Look down to your left as you go. You'll see a lovely waterfall and pool." Ricardo has lived in Grabouw all his life, but until a few months ago had never been up here. "I still can't get over how beautiful these mountains are. Before I was taken on as a guide I was working at a clothing store in Grabouw. Now every day I work in nature. I love it."

"At the moment we employ 18 staff, all from the local area, five of whom are women," explained Ryan. "Each staff member was first trained and assessed on the safety operating procedures of the

system, followed by first aid, and then field guide training to learn about the interpretive art of guiding in a nature reserve. We want each client to feel absolutely safe, but also learn something new about nature and this amazing place that we call home. As we grow, we will continue to hire locally and develop our guides as part of the company ethos."

We got a better view of the waterfall 50 metres below from the suspension bridge between platforms seven and eight and there was a surprise in store at platform nine when Vicky served up Elgin Ice Tea and biscuits. Then it was just a few more fast slides to the final platform.

The kilometre-long uphill walk back out went quickly, the guides stopping often to point out the major fynbos species that we encountered on the rocky path. By lunchtime we were back at the centre enjoying a cool drink and light meal.

I felt privileged to have 'flown' across such an incredible part of the world and have a feeling tickets for this new tour will fly out too, so book ahead! 🐾

TRIP PLANNER

HOW TO GET THERE The Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve is about an hour's drive from Cape Town. Take the N2 over Sir Lowry's Pass and opposite the Peregrine Farm Stall turn left onto the R321 towards Grabouw. About 1km on, turn right to follow the R321 towards Villiersdorp. After about 11km you'll see the sign for the reserve on the left.

COST R555 for *Wild Card* members, otherwise R595 a person.

BOOKINGS 021-300-0501
info@capecanopytour.co.za,
www.capecanopytour.co.za

DURATION 3 to 4 hours depending on the size of the group. There are 13 platforms and slides up to 320m long.

HIKING Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve has fabulous day and overnight hiking trails as well as kloofing for those with experience or a guide. For more information, visit www.capenature.co.za.



Participants get ready to take the zipline across a valley in the Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve.

MOUNTAIN BIKING The Elgin Valley is mountain-biking paradise, so bring your bike if you enjoy exploring on two wheels. See map opposite for more about the 22 km Groenlandberg Trail.

ACCOMMODATION There are four huts for hikers in the reserve, but *Wild* recommends driving to Stellenbosch to stay over in the manor house at CapeNature's Assegaai-bosch Nature Reserve. It is a national monument and you'll be putting your *Wild Card* to good use twice in one day. Self-catering rates start at R1130 a night for up to four people.

These idyllic locations are picture perfect for going down on one knee, or rekindling the feelings of that heady time.

PLACES TO PROPOSE

1 CAPE POINT, Table Mountain National Park *Wild*

The visitors who stream to the lighthouse at the tip of the peninsula seem to have no idea they are bypassing one of Cape Town's prettiest beaches. A stretch of silvery white sand embraced by imposing cliffs, Dias Beach is seldom marked by footprints. Access to the beach is by a set of stairs but don't worry, you'll be walking on air when it comes to the return journey. Pack a blanket and something chilled that you can sip while you watch the Atlantic Ocean come rolling in. With such glorious surrounds you won't need fancy words for your proposal. Afterwards make your way to the stylish Two Oceans Restaurant overlooking False Bay and order a sushi platter to celebrate.

MAKE IT HAPPEN Entry to Cape Point section R110 a person, free with a *Wild Card*. Two Oceans Restaurant 021-780-9200

2 Augrabies Falls National Park *Wild*

Not everyone will see the charm of this dry and seemingly desolate park, but a proposal is as specific as the couple involved. For lovers of big skies, desert plants and deep quiet, Augrabies offers a dramatic backdrop to pop the question. If there's still any doubt, remember that the fall on the northern wall is named the Bridal Veil for its cascading white spray. Plan your proposal for late afternoon when the falls grow luminous in the setting sun. Follow the boardwalk to one of the lookout decks, where you'll be surrounded by the park's natural grandeur, a location worthy of such a life-changing moment.

MAKE IT HAPPEN Chalets from R795 for two people. Entry R38 an adult, free with a *Wild Card*. SANParks Central Reservations 012-428-9111

Find inspiration for your proposal at these *Wild Card* parks and reserves.





A stretch of silvery white sand embraced by imposing cliffs, Dias Beach is seldom marked by footprints.

3 Golden Gate Highlands National Park *Wild*

Was former president Nelson Mandela thinking of the Brandwag when he said, "The Free State landscape gladdens my heart"? If you declare your love in front of its honey-coloured sandstone, the sight of the Brandwag is sure to warm your heart in years to come, too. If you want to enjoy breathtaking views of the buttress in comfort and style, make your way to the revamped Golden Gate Hotel. The cocktail lounge on the top floor has large picture windows that frame the mountain in all its beauty. A discreet conversation could arrange for the delivery of two tall drinks to your table, one concealing a sparkling engagement ring.

MAKE IT HAPPEN Rooms overlooking the Brandwag from R991 a night. Golden Gate Hotel 058-255-1000, SANParks Central Reservations 012-428-9111

4 Albert Falls Dam and Game Reserve *Wild*

Why not treat the love of your life to a picnic to remember? Laze on a rug, drink in the scenery and feed each other tasty morsels. When you think your happiness is complete, ask the big question. For a lovely al fresco treat, less than an hour's drive from the bustle of Durban, head over to Albert Falls. Situated between the folding Karkloof Hills, the glittering dam is a magnet for water babies and nature lovers. Picnic right at the water's edge while you watch zebra grazing idly under the thorn trees nearby. It's a beautiful setting to make a special memory. You could also start your future as a married couple by hosting your wedding at the reserve's intimate gazebo or spacious hall.

MAKE IT HAPPEN Entry fee R32 an adult, *Wild Card* members free. Albert Falls 033-569-1202, 079-528-0748, afrr@msinsi.co.za

5 STONE CAMP, Mkhaya Game Reserve *Wild*

Tables set out under the branches of a large sausage tree, the dinnerware bathed in the glow of paraffin lamps ... It's hard to imagine a more romantic setting than Stone Camp's open-air dining area. Guests at this reserve in the east of Swaziland gather here for a three-course meal after the sunset game drive. It's a leisurely affair so you'll have plenty of time to work up the nerve to ask the big question. And if you want to promise your beloved the moon and the stars, you need only look up. Should you find it hard to go to sleep after all the excitement, the semi-open cottages bring the sights and sounds of the bush that much closer. Let nature's soundtrack call up a night of sweet dreams.

MAKE IT HAPPEN All-inclusive packages start from R1725 a person a night, Big Game Parks +268-2528-3943, reservations@biggameparks.org



Did you know?

By taking a deep breath, closing their nostrils and ears and tightly wrapping their tongue around their mother's teat, hippo calves will happily suckle milk while under water.

TEAM PLAYERS



The Big Five bask in the limelight, but there are other champions of the bush to seek out. Our expanded tick-list makes for the Terrific Ten.

By Andreas Wilson-Späth

IMPACT PLAYER HIPPO

Weighing in at over three and a half tons, the planet's third-largest land animal after elephant and white rhino qualifies for the Terrific Ten by its sheer bulk.

Perfectly adapted to an amphibious lifestyle, the hippo's ears, eyes and nostrils are located high on the head, allowing it to see, hear and smell while almost completely submerged. Sleeping adults can stay below the surface for six minutes at a time and will automatically rise to breathe without having to wake up.

Perhaps somewhat unexpectedly, their closest living relatives are the cetaceans (whales, porpoises and dolphins) with whom they shared a common semi-aquatic ancestor more than 50 million years ago.

Devoid of sweat and sebaceous glands, the hippo's thick skin secretes a red, oily fluid that acts as a moisturiser, antibacterial agent and sunblock. It also lends hippo milk a uniquely bright pink colour and has given rise to the myth that they sweat blood.

With most wild populations in decline and threatened by loss of habitat and poaching, the hippo's conservation status is classified as vulnerable.

WHY THE BIG FIVE?

Lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo and leopard were considered the five most dangerous animals to hunt on foot. Today they top the sightings lists.



Did you know?



African wild dogs very rarely show aggression towards each other and maintain pack hierarchy in a non-violent manner.



RUNNING BACK **AFRICAN WILD DOG**

CHAD COCKING

These distant cousins of our pets rank among the continent's most accomplished hunters. Even lions can't top their near 80 per cent success rate in bringing down prey on a daily basis.

Co-operation is the key to their survival. Each pack of between 10 to 40 animals is led by a single, dominant breeding pair. Their pups are fed and raised collectively by all group members. Wild dogs are known to help weak and old members and, unusually among predators, allow their young to feed first after a kill.

Hunting mostly at dusk or dawn, as well

as on the occasional moonlit night, the painted wolves are known for their noisy and elaborate greeting ceremony accompanied by touching, twittering and whining, which unites them before a hunt. Their stamina for long-distance running is legendary, as is their intelligent use of teamwork and various vocalisations in the pursuit of antelopes, warthogs, rodents and birds.

The African wild dog is South Africa's most endangered large carnivore. The Kruger National Park hosts the largest free-ranging population in the country, of around 130 individuals.

Did you know?



Fewer than 1000 cheetahs survive in South Africa. Across the continent, cheetah numbers have dropped steeply, from around 100 000 a century ago to less than 10 000 today.



BRIDGETTA BARNARD

PRINCE OF WINGS CHEETAH

A cheetah can accelerate to its top speed of nearly 120 km/h within a few seconds, covering six to nine metres with each stride. Recent research indicates that their high-speed lifestyle is more energy efficient than expected and doesn't compromise their chances of survival when pitted against other predators (see more on page 8). Human encroachment, not competition, is to blame for their dwindling numbers.

What distinguishes cheetah from other big cats is that their claws are only partially retractable so they can't climb

trees and being diurnal hunters, their night vision is not particularly good. They also don't roar but purr, hiss, growl, bark, whine and chirp instead.

The oldest of Africa's big cats, cheetahs evolved some five and a half million years ago, while lions and leopards appeared some four million years later. Primitive cheetah fossils unearthed in China's Gansu Province suggest cheetahs originated in Asia and not, as previously thought, in the Americas. The name comes from the Hindi word 'chita', describing the spotted coat.

Did you know?



Contrary to popular belief, there is little scientific evidence to suggest that honey badgers follow honey-guide birds to beehives. The roles may well be reversed, with the bird following the honey badger to the prize.



HARDY HOOKER HONEY BADGER

WILLEM KRUGER

The honey badger is generally regarded as nature's most fearless creature. Its name *Mellivora capensis*, Latin for Cape honey eater, is misleading as it doesn't like honey. It's not even a true badger. Initially included in the subfamily *Melinae*, which does contain proper badgers, it now has its own genus, *Mellivora*. An enthusiastic raider of beehives, it's the brood, the eggs, larva, pupa and embryos, that it's after, not the honey.

True to their reputation for ferocity, honey badgers are equipped with an impressive arsenal. Their strong jaws and

sharp teeth can crack a turtle shell, they can survive most snake bites and insect stings, and their tough skin is hard to penetrate but loose enough to allow them to wriggle out of tight situations. Add to that formidable foreclaws and a stifling odour emitted from an anal pouch and it's no wonder that most predators have learnt to avoid them.

Classified as near threatened in South Africa, this carnivorous forager is much persecuted by farmers and beekeepers, as well as caught for bushmeat and the traditional medicine trade.



Did you know?



Special sphincters in a giraffe's legs prevent fluid build-up above the hooves when they are standing still.

LANKY LINE-OUT GIRAFFE

Scientists have long been fascinated by the physiology of the world's tallest animal, especially their amazing cardiovascular system which ensures a steady blood supply from the ankles to the far-distant brain. A large and powerful heart generates blood pressures up to five times higher than those measured in humans, necessitating blood vessels with extremely thick yet elastic walls.

A complex maze of capillaries at the base of the brain and a network of valves and blood vessels in the neck regulate blood flow, allowing giraffes to quickly lift their heads from ground level to the top of tall trees without fainting.

As effective vegetation pruners, seed distributors and tree pollinators, giraffes play an important ecological role.

As many as nine distinct subspecies of giraffe are recognised, but only one occurs in South Africa. Their closest living relative is the rare okapi, endemic to the forests of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

SCOTT RAMSAY



WHO GETS YOUR VOTE?

Which icon of the bush would you add to the list? Porcupine, eland, aardwolf, armadillo? Go to www.wildcard.co.za and type 'Terrific Ten' in the Search Box, then add your choice.

ENGLEROPHYTUM MAGALISMONTANUM

STAMVRUG

From December to February, this tree is a scarlet spectacle of delicious fruit.

Perhaps better known by its Afrikaans name, *stamvrug*, stemfruit is one of South Africa's more popular veld fruits. In summer the ripe fruit is bright red and about 3 cm long, with a sharp tip. True to its name, the berries grow directly from the stems in dense clusters. The leathery skin of the fruit covers purple flesh and sticky, milky latex.

The fruit is used to make syrup, jelly, jam, wine, vinegar and sometimes distilled to produce *mampoer*, a strong alcoholic drink. The edible berry is a popular thirst quencher in the veld and packs a Vitamin C punch of 40 mg per 100 g.

An attractive evergreen that is easily grown, *stamvrug* is characteristically found on rocky outcrops and quartzite ridges, and in riverine forest fringes in Gauteng, North West, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal. Depending on the habitat, it is small to medium in size, between three and 15 metres.

The leaves have a very prominent midrib, curl under and are often crowded at the end of branchlets. While golden new leaves look like flowers, older leaves are glossy dark to blue-green above and covered with a whitish, waxy film, giving the tree a silvery look from afar.



Engleraphytum magalismontanum



♂ *Pseudacraea boisduvalii trimeni*

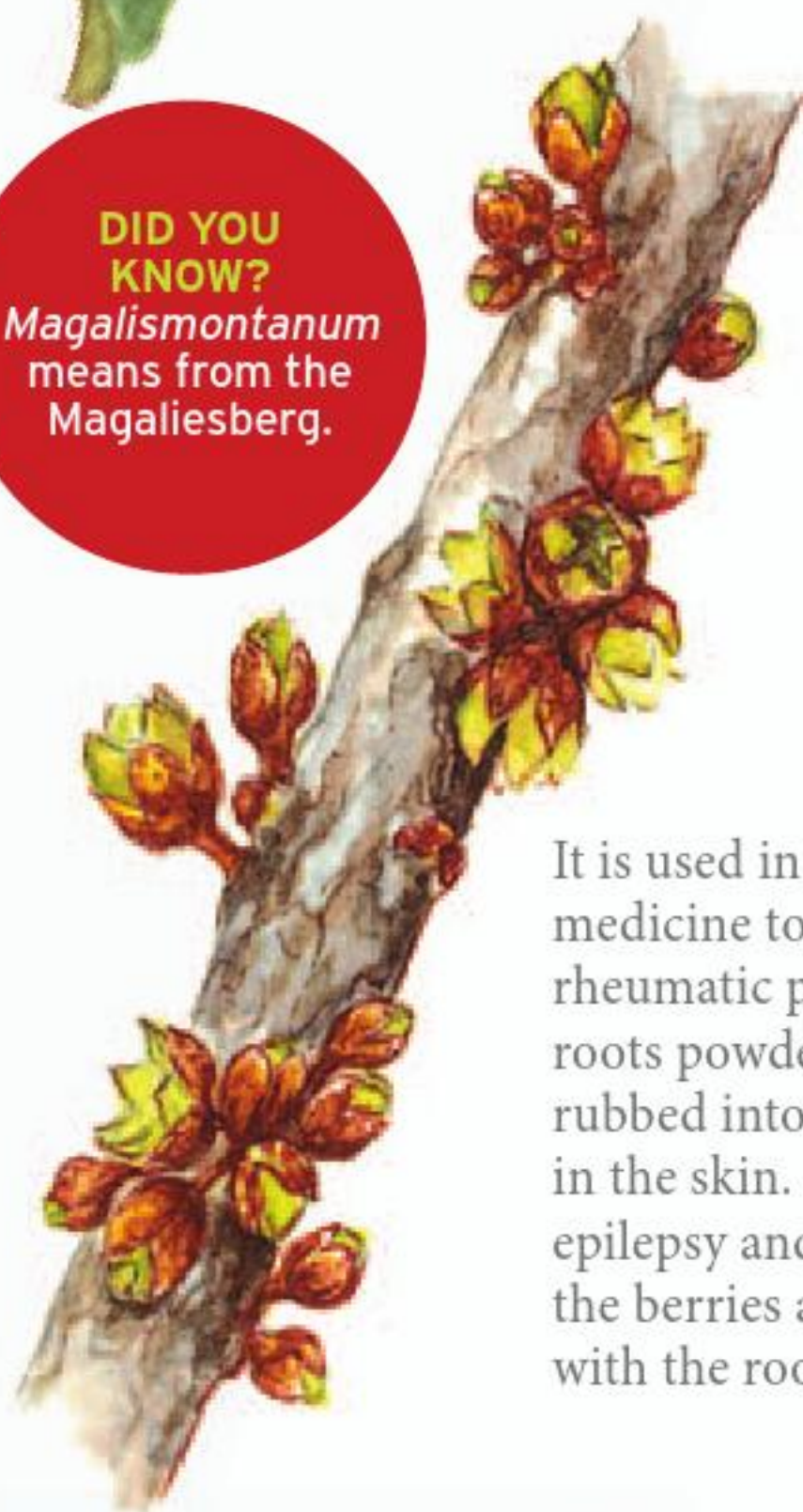
Animals such as birds, baboons and monkeys love the fruit. Bushpigs dig up the roots. The larvae of the butterfly *Pseudacraea boisduvalii trimeni* use the plant as a food source.



DID YOU KNOW?
Magalismontanum means from the Magaliesberg.

FLORAL DISPLAY

Clusters of small star-shaped flowers, brownish pink and white, bloom from June to December and are, unfortunately, unpleasantly scented. Sometimes flowers and fruits can be found on the plant at the same time. The tree can be single or multi-stemmed, and may branch at ground level. Branches hang down to the ground.



It is used in herbal medicine to relieve rheumatic pain, the roots powdered and rubbed into incisions in the skin. To treat epilepsy and headache, the berries are mashed with the root.



Dalman Reedt

2012

ILLUSTRATION OWNED BY DAAN SCHOEMAN FINANCIAL PLANNING SOLUTIONS

WIN

To stand a chance to win a certified print, simply answer the following question: What is the colour of this tree's ripe fruit? SMS Stamvrug: answer and your valid *Wild Card* number to 33929. It costs R1.50 an SMS. Closing date: 14 February 2015. A winner will be selected by lucky draw.

SHADOW

Why do birds sometimes attack windows or car mirrors? Are they demented? **By Joël Roerig**



MIRROR IMAGE
Some birds, like
the collared
sunbird, are
drawn to their
reflections.

BOXING

For some people it is a hornbill flinging itself into a window of their Kruger chalet with a mighty thud as they are trying to catch an afternoon nap. For others it's a sparrow or a thrush hovering frenetically at the side mirror of their car. For me it was a pair of collared sunbirds clowning around in front of one particular window of our house in Hoedspruit that made me wonder just what these birds which seem obsessed with their reflections were doing.





A variety of birds are known to interact with their reflections, including babblers, sparrows and hornbills.

The metallic yellow and green sunbirds, darting and frantically chirruping and pecking at the glass, provided plenty of questions. Were they trying to come in? What was so special about that one window in particular? Were they hurting themselves in the process? Should I do something to stop them? Why was it that they simply couldn't leave their reflections alone?

I had seen other birds acting in similar ways, including ground-hornbills in Mapungubwe with an unhealthy interest in my shiny vehicle and an arrow-marked babbler noisily disagreeing with its reflection in my car mirror in Marakele. I began to research the phenomenon in books and scientific papers with the view to writing it up for the e-journal *Ornithological Observations*. I asked fellow nature lovers to send me records of birds shadow boxing, as the behaviour is called. I wanted to know what 'my' sunbirds were up to, why both the male and female were so active and which other birds behaved in the same way.

The female seemed to spur him on by hopping around in a bush opposite one particular reflective window.

Stranger danger

Scientists widely agree that birds attacking, fighting, calling, singing, staring, pecking, displaying or flying at their reflection, perceive the image as a stranger. The only recorded exception to this is the Eurasian magpie, which recognised itself in a mir-

ror during a experiment, something only animals such as elephants, apes and dolphins had been known to do.

Besides birds, shadow boxing has also been recorded in stickleback fish and mammals such as sea lions and monkeys. The behaviour is usually part of a territorial defence routine for a bird, so it is no surprise the behaviour is particularly prominent during the breeding season.

I discovered that legendary Eastern Cape naturalist Jack Skead had described the behaviour of 'my' collared sunbirds in a 1962 paper. He wrote that the sunbird "becomes a great shadow boxer on window-panes ... where opportunity occurs, such as when riverside or seaside cottages are built into the dune- or river-forest bush." We lived in a riverine area at the time. Collared sunbirds pair for life and occupy a territory throughout the year, which explains why the behaviour lasted for months, the male usually being more vocal but the female often more active and seemingly spurring him on by hopping around in a bush opposite one particular reflective window.

Literature on the topic is scarce and scattered. Besides an illustrated article by amateur Australian ornithologist Keith Alfred Hindwood in 1941, the paper I went on to write was the first ever literature review worldwide. *Ornithological Observations* is part of a citizen science project by the Animal Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town, in which professional and amateur birders can

Should we try to prevent shadow boxing?

Shadow boxing can be prevented only by removing the reflective property of the glass. One of the ways to do this is to put transparent clingfilm against the outside of a window. There is one record of a pin-tailed whydah that apparently died shadow boxing, but in general it doesn't seem that birds hurt themselves. When you have a hornbill determined to peck his 'rival' to death at your window though, it may be better for your glass and sanity to intervene.



Author Joël Roerig was prompted to investigate the behaviour after he noticed collared sunbirds performing outside one of his windows.

submit interesting observations of bird behaviour.

Where science was lacking, 'citizens' stepped in and many people sent me their experiences or photos. Seth Musker wrote to me about a long-billed crombec "attacking its reflection in a car's side mirror" at Geelbek in the West Coast National Park. Thomas Hohls reported a pair of Cape robin-chats "having a go at my rental car mirror" in the same park. He also mentioned many instances of shadow boxing in Kruger, including hornbills, dark-capped bulbuls, crested barbets and Southern ground-hornbill. "Although the latter just blew himself up and didn't actually have a go at the car!"

I am not sure if Thomas realised how lucky he was. In 2008, a group of ground-hornbills inflicted considerable damage on a brand new Land Rover Discovery in KwaZulu-Natal's oNgoye Forest. Michele Greve, daughter of the man who owned the vehicle, described on SABirdnet how they dented and scratched all side panels, some of the bonnet and managed to dislodge part of the bumper on the back of the car.

The woodland kingfisher and a few African paradise-flycatchers, two species known for their ferocious territorial defence, have been the only shadow boxing South African migrants I have recorded so far. After sunbirds, the hornbill group includes the most species that shadow box, with Kruger records mostly reflecting the yellow- and red-billed culprits and Kwa-

Zulu-Natal records mostly coming from crowned hornbills. I also have shadow boxing records of African grey hornbills in Pretoria, Monteiro's and Damara hornbills in Namibia, and rhinoceros and oriental pied hornbills from as far as Singapore.

Based on literature study and people's private records, my ever-growing database now contains 173 bird species interacting with their reflections, of which 89 were recorded in Southern Africa, with 10 species of sunbirds topping the list. Species most often recorded are Cape sparrow (16 times), crested barbet (15), Cape wagtail (13) and collared sunbird (12). Females sometimes engage in the activity, especially some sparrows and sunbirds, but also the groundscraper thrush, Southern boubou, black cuckoo-

shrike, grey tit and even an ostrich.

Shadow boxing occurs throughout the year, but October, when many local birds establish territories, seems to have by far the most records. Some birds just can't get enough of one particular window, like 'my' collared sunbirds. A Gauteng pin-tailed whydah was observed attacking the same windows for years. A Knysna woodpecker at the Canon Rocks Caravan Park in the Eastern Cape is a famous re-offender, attacking car mirrors of campers for years on end. A male Cape sparrow was said to attack a bedroom window "for at least 20 years", suggesting successive dominant males performing the same ritual at the same site, because the oldest Cape sparrow ever recorded was 10 years and eight months old when it died. 🐾

Bennett's woodpecker



White-crested helmetshrike



African pied wagtail



Cardinal woodpecker



UNDER SIEGE

Duncan Butchart, who did the illustrations for this article, saw a male Bennett's woodpecker "going crazy at its reflection in my car windscreen" in Satara. Kruger visitor **Lisl van Deventer** reported "an orange-breasted bush-shrike attacking my car's side mirror".

Neels Roos described an African pied wagtail attacking a sliding door in Shimuwini and a yellow-bellied greenbul a hut window at Sirheni.

Lia Steen had a Bennett's woodpecker and woodland kingfisher engaging their reflections on her bakkie at Pretoriuskop.

Vincent Ward noted shadow boxing-like behaviour at a mirrored window at Lambert's Bay's Bird Island in kelp gull, African penguin, Cape cormorant and Cape gannet.

GET INVOLVED

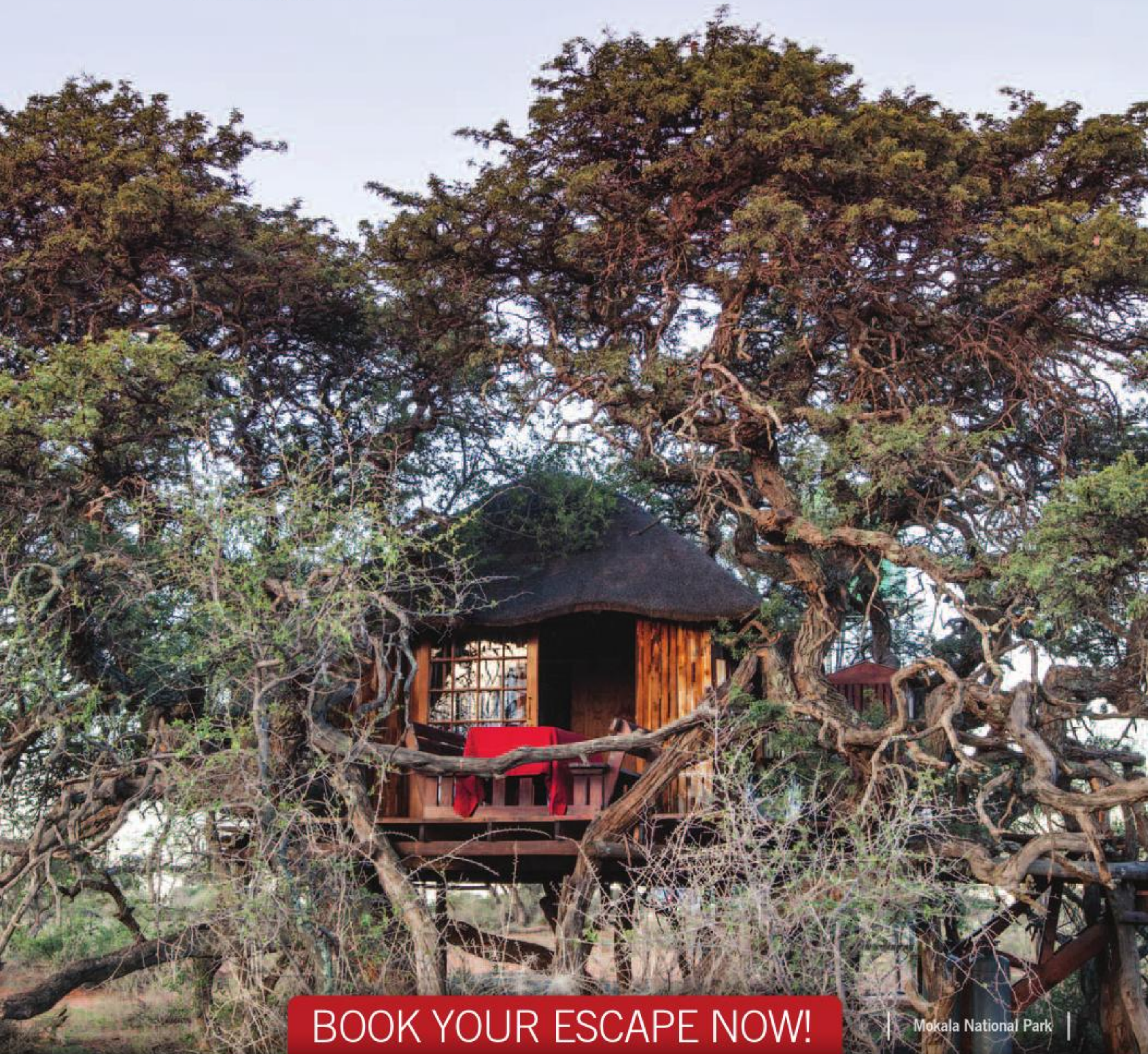
- To learn more about shadow boxing, download Joel's paper from the e-journal *Ornithological Observations* at <http://oo.adu.org.za/content.php?id=83>
- Submit shadow boxing sightings and contribute to the complete database by visiting shadowboxingbirds.wordpress.com
- To read about interesting historic records, go to www.wildcard.co.za and type "Shadow boxing" in the search box.

www.sanparks.org
www.sanparks.mobi



Turn your holiday into a tree-top adventure

Realise your childhood dream
and spend the night in one of our
comfortably furnished tree houses.



BOOK YOUR ESCAPE NOW!

Mokala National Park



TREE HOUSE, Mokala National Park: from R1 111 a night for 2,
book directly with park on 053-204-8000

TREE-TOP CHALET, Garden Route National Park (Knysna section):
from R1 300 a night for 2

5% discount on online bookings: www.sanparks.org

| Reservations (012) 428 9111 or e-mail reservations@sanparks.org |



DE MOND
The estuary of
the Heuningnes
River is prime
for fishing and
swimming.



GREEN SPOTS

Four coastal reserves, three days ... Simply join the dots for a wild escape within an easy drive of Cape Town. By Ron Swilling

IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY TIMES YOU CAN LOOK AT A MAP and not see all the green spots that are right there, sandwiched between the brown. Then one day you notice, with surprise, that there's a whole forest of them, and only a few hours away from home.

That one day came. We zoomed in on the green areas, searching for pockets of wilderness to escape the business of life, and chose four reserves that we could comfortably squeeze into three days' leave from work. All were picked for their special character and beauty: De Hoop, De Mond, Agulhas and Walker Bay's De Kelders. A delicious mix of wild places conserved by CapeNature and SANParks, and all Wild Card destinations.

Joining the dots, we followed the main route out of Cape Town and then happily veered onto gravel backroads that took us to Arniston for lunch in the old fishing

PETER CHADWICK

■ CAPE COASTAL PARKS ROAD TRIP



Far left: A walkway leads down to the Heuningnes River at De Mond.
Left: De Hoop's untouched beaches invite you to explore.

village, through Elim and past wetlands and farmlands that were liberally sprinkled with blue cranes.

Reached along a puddle-filled dirt road, De Hoop merges stately old farm character with spectacular beaches. The reserve dazzled us with its beauty and wildlife, including Cape mountain zebra, eland and bontebok. Old strandloper middens, covering the tops of cliffs like shell tablecloths, left me with a satisfying feeling that many a good meal was savoured looking out onto this ocean speckled with whale spray. Secret coves and limestone cliffs, 'sand turned stone turned lace', lured us to explore, dipping and climbing, and watching whales flapping in between. At night, owls hooted me to sleep under a blanket of milkwoods.

De Mond has its own character and is an estuarine treat. The Heuningnes River meets the sea at this special spot, but not before it fans out, providing greater flamingo with generous feeding grounds.

Walkways lead towards the pristine beach, and then leave you to squelch through the marsh and dune vegetation to watch ocean and river meet and cormorants fly up in bursts of black wings.

We followed the call to Cape Agulhas, to spend time on the southernmost tip of Africa and to test our fear of heights on the lighthouse stairs. That accomplished, with heads spinning and hair blown into halos, we drove the gravel route past the national park and turned westwards towards our last stop.

De Kelders, at the eastern extent of Walker Bay Nature Reserve, presented something totally different, another change of pace. A large cave buzzed with bees and energy that remained from its Middle and Late Stone Age occupants. Klipgat's rocky walls framed superlative vistas of the 17 km-long Die Plaat beach. Deeply appreciative of these vivid green pockets and vibrant wild wonders, we headed home, racing the sun to the west. 🐾

TRIP PLANNER

All the reserves, except Walker Bay, offer hiking trails and accommodation.

DE HOOP

021-422-4522, www.dehoopcollection.com or CapeNature
021-483-0190, www.capenature.co.za,
reservation.alert@capenature.co.za

DE MOND AND WALKER BAY

CapeNature
021-483-0190, www.capenature.co.za,
reservation.alert@capenature.co.za

AGULHAS NATIONAL PARK

SANParks
012-428-9111
www.sanparks.org



HOW TO FIND THE GREEN SPOTS

De Hoop is east of Bredasdorp, some three hours' drive from Cape Town. De Mond lies between Arniston and Struisbaai. Cape Agulhas is south of Bredasdorp. De Kelders, part of the Walker Bay Nature Reserve, lies between Gansbaai and Hermanus.



www.msinsi.co.za

Do you own a boat? Come and enjoy your boat
and fish for bass and more in Msinsi's dams.

SUMMER IS HERE!

ALBERT FALLS | HAZELMERE | INANDA | NAGLE | SHONGWENI | BON ACCORDE

033 569 1202 | 032 533 2315 | 031 766 9946 | 031 782 8085 | 031 769 1283 | 033 569 1643

WATERSPORTS & FISHING



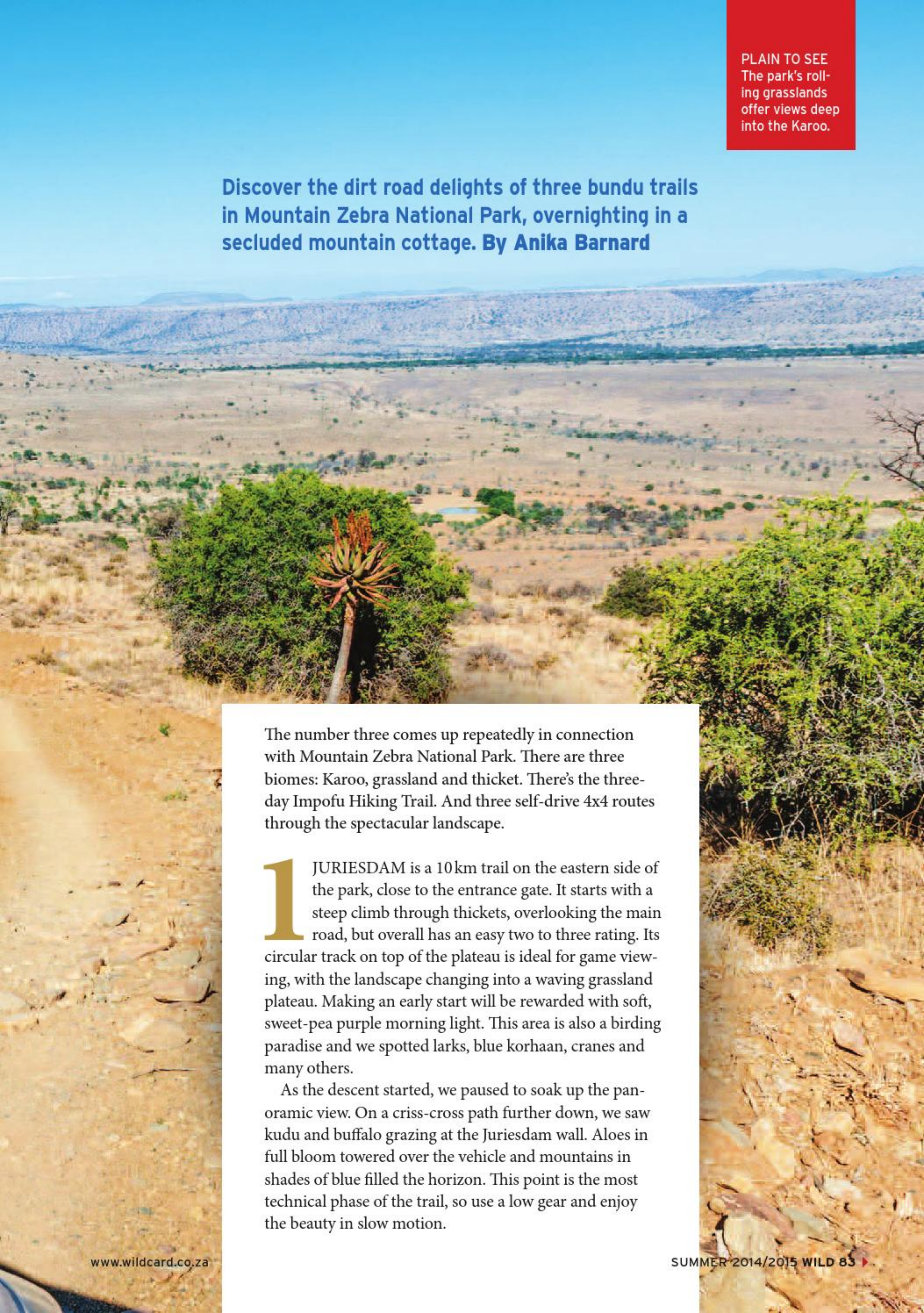
FIND US ON FACEBOOK
AND TWITTER



■ OFF-ROAD

4X4³





PLAIN TO SEE
The park's rolling grasslands offer views deep into the Karoo.

Discover the dirt road delights of three bundu trails in Mountain Zebra National Park, overnighting in a secluded mountain cottage. By Anika Barnard

The number three comes up repeatedly in connection with Mountain Zebra National Park. There are three biomes: Karoo, grassland and thicket. There's the three-day Impofu Hiking Trail. And three self-drive 4x4 routes through the spectacular landscape.

1 JURIESDAM is a 10km trail on the eastern side of the park, close to the entrance gate. It starts with a steep climb through thickets, overlooking the main road, but overall has an easy two to three rating. Its circular track on top of the plateau is ideal for game viewing, with the landscape changing into a waving grassland plateau. Making an early start will be rewarded with soft, sweet-pea purple morning light. This area is also a birding paradise and we spotted larks, blue korhaan, cranes and many others.

As the descent started, we paused to soak up the panoramic view. On a criss-cross path further down, we saw kudu and buffalo grazing at the Juriesdam wall. Aloes in full bloom towered over the vehicle and mountains in shades of blue filled the horizon. This point is the most technical phase of the trail, so use a low gear and enjoy the beauty in slow motion.

Bankberg Mountain was the site of a rock slide in 1974. The Grootkloof Scar is the result.



2 THE UMNGENI TRAIL is an 8 km challenge, northwest of the main rest camp. Although this route is the shortest, it is the most technical due to the rocky terrain and a steep incline linked with short, cheeky turns that take you to the top. The trail leads to a viewpoint where you can see the Scar of Grootkloof. This 250-metre scar was formed against Bankberg when a massive boulder came down the mountainside following heavy rains in 1974. Imagine the thunderous rumbling caused by a chunk of dolerite weighing approximately 22 tons!

The trail ends at the entrance to the game-rich Rooiplaat Loop. Over the last kilometre the scenery starts to change once again, into breathtaking savanna with roaming red hartebeest, springbok, eland and mountain zebra in a sea of orange sunset.

The park's cheetahs are often spotted in the area of the Rooiplaat Loop.



3 THE SONNENRUST TRAIL (14,2 km) is in the north-western side of the park, in the direction of the well-known Salpeterkop. Not only is there an abundance of wildlife, but the area is also rich in South African history. During the Anglo-Boer War, British soldiers made a chess board on a flat rock on top of Salpeterkop and played against another group of soldiers by signalling the moves using mirror flashes. A guided hike can be arranged to view the historical site.

At the foot of the mountain we heard the roar of lion and spotted two males against the backdrop of Salpeterkop. Another tick on our growing list. Heading to an elevated lookout point to the western side of the park we were entertained by a troop of baboons, monkeys, gemsbok and fluffy-tailed ground squirrels. We thought it couldn't get better but then, where the trail connects with the Rooiplaat Loop, a breathtaking encounter happened: four cheetahs in swaying grass. We didn't want to leave. 🐾



Getting there
Mountain Zebra National Park is between Cradock and Graaff-Reinet, off the R61, about a three-hour drive from Port Elizabeth.

We relaxed around a braai watched over by a karee in an area walled by huge boulders.

Bakana mountain cottage is a peaceful retreat away from the rest camp.

TRIP PLANNER

ACCOMMODATION *Wild* stayed at Bakana, meaning 'beacon', nestled in Berghofkloof. After a hot shower to wash off the trail dust, we relaxed around a braai watched over by a karee in an area walled by huge boulders. The silence of the night and dazzling display of the Milky Way are awe-inspiring. The cottage has two bedrooms that sleep four and a hikers' room with six bunk beds.

There are two of these secluded mountain cottages, accessible only by 4x4 or 2x4 with diff lock. Cottages do not have electricity,

but the kitchen is equipped with a gas stove and solar-powered fridge and there's a gas hot-water shower. R700 a night for one or two people, R160 an extra adult, R80 an extra child.

The rest camp has family cottages that sleep four and look out over the mountains. From R850 a night for one or two people, R210 an extra adult, R105 an extra child. The campsite has 20 electrified stands, which are R205 a night for one or two people, R72 an extra adult, R36 an extra child.

4X4 TRAILS No booking required

and no activity fee is charged. The Juriesdam and Sonnenrust trails are relatively easy drives, while the Umngeni is more challenging. Trails may be closed in wet weather or for maintenance.

ACTIVITIES The whole family can enjoy guided morning or evening game drives or an outing to view rock art. The park is unique in offering cheetah tracking, minimum age 12 (R310 a person). Book with reception on 048-881-2427 or mountainzebra@sanparks.org.

BOOKINGS 012-428-9111, www.sanparks.org

OUTDOORWEAR, WORKWEAR, ANYWEAR



Jeep

Cargo Short

R449

100% Ramie/Cotton Twill.



Jeep

Chinos

FROM R499

Assorted styles
and colours available.



Jeep

14cm Walk Shorts

R349

Comfort, durability and styling.



Jeep

Short Sleeve Shirt

R379

Versatility and style.
Available in check and stripe.



Jeep

Men's Golfer

R379

Various colours available.



trappers.co.za



/TrappersOutdoor.co.za



@TrappersOutdoor

Prices subject to change without notice. While stocks last. Subject to availability.

Not all items may be available at all stores. Products may vary from images shown. Ts&Cs apply.



Sterling
Cargo Shorts
R249

100% Durable cotton canvas.



Sterling
Chino Shorts
R199

Various colours available.
2 back pockets.

Sterling
2-Pack Shirt
NOW R499

WAS R640
Short sleeve.
Regular fit.



Sterling
Shirt
R289

100% cotton twill.



Delta Shorts
R649

Quick drying, wicking UV
resistant fabric. Zip secure
pockets for valuables.

first Ascent
Utility Trousers
Men's and Ladies'
R849

Quick drying, UV resistant
fabric. Zip off legs.



mac
in a sac

Waterproof Jacket
R599

Waterproof and breathable.
Packs away into a convenient pouch.



CAT

Propane Boot
R1 499

Tumbled full-grain
leather or pull-up leather
upper. Removable, perforated EVA
with Gel Technology insert sock liner.



Salomon

Speedcross 3
Men's and Ladies'
R1 799

Lightweight trail
running shoe.
Aggressive profile.
Anti-debris mesh.
Assorted colours.

Free t-shirt worth R219



Ubok Boot
R1 899

All leather 3-piece upper
with full length foot bed
and arch support.



Freestyle
Handcrafted Genuine Leather

Hunter
Suede Shoe
R349

Crafted the old-fashioned way, with a
strong insole and sole for extra wearability.

Visit trappers.co.za to locate your nearest store.

trappers®
essential outdoor gear

THE HOME OF FESTIVE GIFTS & GEAR



Jeep 2 Pack T-Shirt **NOW R299**

WAS R438
Men's and ladies'



MORAKNIV Companion Knife **NOW R159**

WAS R199
Various colours available.



Tekut Biltong Cutter **NOW R349**

WAS R399
Detachable knife. Built-in
Tungsten Carbide sharpener.



KAKIEBOS Assorted T-Shirts Men's and Ladies' **NOW R169**

WAS R219
Local flavour for
everyday lifestyle wear.



STANLEY 1 litre Flask **NOW R549**

WAS R699
Hot or cold for 24 hours.
Lifetime warranty.

Free eCycle Mug worth R149



Oregon SCIENTIFIC Wireless Pro Weather Station WMR89 **NOW R2 499**

WAS R3 199
1 week data logging. Easy-to-read
backlit display shows latest forecast,
indoor/outdoor temperature, wind chill,
humidity, barometric and
rainfall readings,
and more.



Includes UV Sensor

trappers.co.za



/TrappersOutdoor.co.za



@TrappersOutdoor

Prices valid until 31 December 2014. Subject to availability. Not all items may be available at all stores.
Products may vary from images shown. While stocks last. Ts&Cs apply. E&OE



LED LENSER

X21R.2

NOW R6 799

WAS R7 199

3000 powerful lumens in a handheld flashlight. Advanced Focus System. Speed Focus. IPX 4 water resistance.

PETZL

Tikkina Headlamp

NOW R179

WAS R249

60 Lumens. Several proximity lighting modes. Push-button for easy, quick lighting mode selection.



Bushnell

**Falcon 10x50
& Powerview 10x25
Combo**

NOW R1 499

WAS R1 699

Falcon has an Instafocus® system for fast focus on moving targets. Powerview is a great long-range compact binocular ideal for any type of activity.



ULTRA TEC

Emergency Lantern Kit

NOW R499

WAS R599

4 LED Flashlight & 24 LED Lantern mode. 12V cigarette lighter adaptor. Convenient durable carry bag.



Consol

Solar Jar

NOW R149

WAS R179

Safe, easy and environmentally friendly light alternative.



terra-firma

**Pinnacle
32 litre Daypack**

NOW R399

WAS R499

Padded laptop sleeve. Aeradvance harness system. Perfect for the urban jungle.



terra-firma

Safari High Back Chair

NOW R649

WAS R799

Double padded. Aluminium arms. Rated to 150kg.



first Ascent

**Discovery Jacket
Men's and Ladies'**

NOW R1 499

WAS R1 799

3-in-1 waterproof breathable jacket. Removable inner fleece and zip-off hood.



LEATHERMAN

**Style CS & Monarch
Combo**

NOW R399

WAS R599

So stylish it's almost a shame it fits in your pocket. Includes a 20 lumen lightweight torch.



tasco

**Essentials 10x42
& 10x25 Combo**

NOW R999

WAS R1 299

10 x Magnification, Roof-prism, Centre Focus and fully multi-coated optics, plus 10x25 for outstanding compact performance.



trappers®
essential outdoor gear

Visit trappers.co.za to locate your nearest store.



SHOOT LIKE A PRO

Canon EOS 1Ds MkII,
500mm plus 1.4x extender,
1/320 sec, f/16, ISO 250

HIGH NOON

Photographing wildlife in the harsh midday sun can lead to excessive contrast and washed-out colours, but with a little creativity it's still possible to produce great images. By Ann and Steve Toon

They say only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun. For most wildlife photographers, noon is the time to review images from the morning's sweet-light session, catch a few zzzz's, or perfect that new marinade for the evening's braai. Anything but photograph. But then again ...



If you really want to photograph when the sun's overhead, do as the animals do and head for shade or water. Light shade dramatically reduces the problems of excess contrast, where your highlights blow out and shadows go black. Shooting animals at water at this time gives you the opportunity to photograph thronging herds and behaviour you're less likely to see when the light is golden but the waterholes are quiet. Turn the difficult conditions to your advantage. We deliberately went in tight on this zebra 'wallpaper' scene, so the shot was virtually black and white and the high contrast contributed to the bold, graphic feel.

■ SHOOT LIKE A PRO

Canon EOS 1Ds MkII,
500mm plus 1.4x extender,
1/400 sec, f/11, ISO 250



Water is a photographer's ally
when the sun's beating down.

Canon EOS 1Ds MkII, 300mm,
1/4000 sec, f/4.5, ISO 100

◀ DETAIL SHOTS

If we're travelling in the heat of the day, we'll keep our cameras primed for action shots in case we spot something exciting and need to react fast, such as the time we arrived at Shingwedzi in Kruger and found this huge croc displaying his dentures. One thing you're not short of when photographing in the middle of the day is speed. We'll aim for details and close-ups, using a big lens to home in on the interesting behaviour and help avoid tricky highlights or dense shadows. Water is your ally when the sun's beating down. In the croc's case, it helped bounce light up into the shadows, softening the harsh contrast. This works for birds flying over water, too.

TIPS

In bright sun, we routinely underexpose to help saturate colours and avoid burning out the highlights. Anything between $\frac{1}{3}$ and 1 stop may be necessary. Use the rear LCD screen to check.

Shooting in RAW gives you a lot more scope to tweak images in post-processing, adjusting curves to reduce excessive contrast or using a shadows/highlights tool.

A touch of warming by adjusting the white balance in post-processing can make harshly lit images more pleasing, but remember 'less is more' or you'll end up with something too 'digital'. The same goes for boosting colour vibrancy or saturation.



Wildlife photographers Ann and Steve Toon are Englishmen – and don't fear the midday sun.

▲ FLOWERS IN THE SUN

Some subjects leave you no choice but to photograph in the middle of the day, since many flowers don't open up fully until the sun's high in the sky. We enjoy photographing flowers because we have the luxury of more time to get creative than with moving wildlife subjects. Shallow focus such as here, zoom bursts, and slow shutter speed blur are all worth exploring to help convey the delicacy and elegance of the subject. Travel with the sun at your back to see potential subjects at their best. Even in summer the sun isn't directly overhead at midday, something to bear in mind when photographing animals as well. 🐾

CRACKING good eggs

The clever casing of a shell gives baby reptiles a safe start in life.

By Emma Bryce

CROCODILE

During the dry season, crocodiles build tunnels into sandy riverside banks. This is where they will lay their eggs, up to 60 at a time. Amazingly, baby crocodiles become male or female based on how warm the sand gets! At below 31°C, eggs produce females; between 31 and 34°C the babies turn into males. If babies have trouble hatching, crocodile moms will gently crack the shells between their teeth to help their youngsters escape.

Is it a boy or a girl?

TEMPERATURES AT WHICH EGGS INCUBATE



Did You Know?

Reptiles are known as amniotes. This means their eggs have special protective layers inside that stop them from drying out on land.



BREAKING FREE

How do reptile babies get out of their shells? Both crocodiles and turtles have an 'egg tooth', a hard knob on the end of their snouts. This helps them crack the egg when it is time to break out.



LOGGERHEAD TURTLE

In summer, loggerhead females swim from far away to the northern KwaZulu-Natal coast. The reason? They are there to lay clutches of eggs in the golden beach sand. Just like crocodiles, baby turtles become male or female depending on how warm it is in the nest. When it's hatching time, the babies tunnel out of their sandy hideout. Then they move towards the sea as fast as their new little flippers can carry them.



WATER MONITOR

If there was a prize for the most cunning nest, this reptile would win it. The mother breaks open an active termite mound to lay her eggs inside. She knows the hard-working termites will repair the hole and at the same time seal her offspring safely inside. When it's time to get out, the baby monitors will wait for rain to soften the mound. Otherwise their mother may return to help her little ones break free.



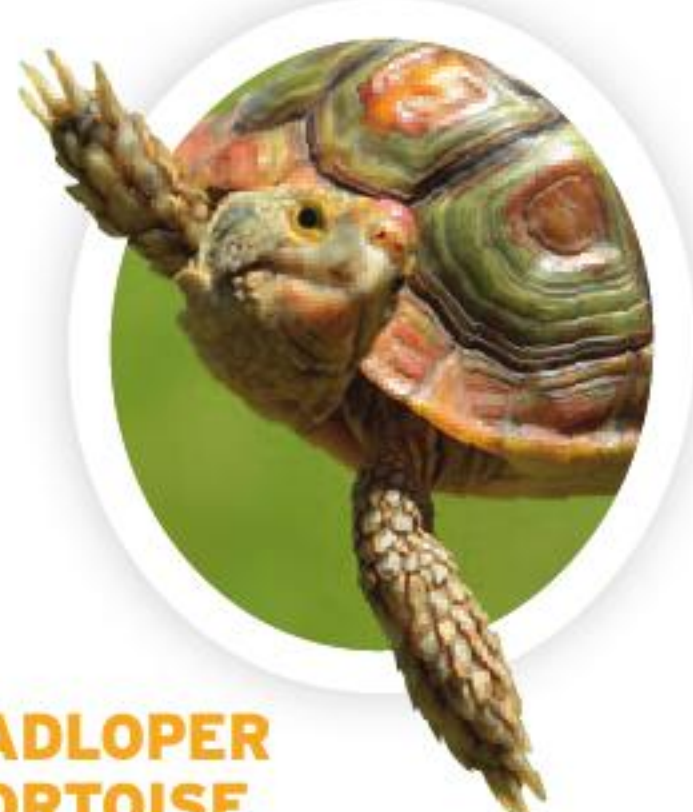
AFRICAN ROCK PYTHON

The long, sleek python can produce around 50 eggs at a time. Some super mamas even lay up to 100. The mother python guards her pile of eggs fiercely. She coils herself around them in a tight swirl that also helps them to hatch. But once the babies have snaked out of their shells, the mother lets them go free. Then it's up to the little snakes to become totally independent in the wild.



FLAP-NECK CHAMELEON

Some chameleons give birth to their young, but these babies come out of eggs. The offspring of the flap-neck chameleon can take up to nine months to hatch – as long as it takes a human baby to be born! The reason it takes so long is probably so the babies are born almost a year later, just as it starts warming up again. Warmer weather will make it easier for the tiny, fragile chameleons to survive.



PADLOPER TORTOISE

Padlopers are some of the tiniest tortoises in the world. That might explain why some of them can squeeze out only one egg at a time. But despite this reptile's petite size, its egg is actually quite large. So large, in fact, that the mother's shell has to grow bigger as the egg grows inside her. Newborns are still really tiny, though. When they break out of their shell, they're only the size of your thumb.

DID YOU KNOW? A large python egg can weigh up to 170 grams – about three times as much as the eggs in your fridge.

The size of the egg inside the mother tortoise.



WIN A STAY IN ROCHERPAN NATURE RESERVE

EXCLUSIVE TO WILD CARD MEMBERS



Rocherpan's eco-cabins are sensitive to the setting.



KATE COLLINS

Rocherpan is a magnet for birds, but human visitors are just as likely to fall in love with the glittering vlei, pristine fynbos and untouched coastline. In keeping with the glorious surrounds, the eco-cabins touch the Earth lightly and are as beautiful as they are practical. In 2015, the reserve will open four family-sized cabins with two bedrooms each. You could be among the first to stay in one of the new family cabins by entering our competition.

How to enter: Email the answer to the question below along with your name and valid *Wild Card* number to competition@tipafrica.co.za (subject line: Rocherpan). **QUESTION: How many bedrooms will the new family cabins have?**

Competition rules The competition is open to valid *Wild Card* members only. The prize is a two-night midweek stay for four people (conservation/entry fees and all meals excluded). The prize is valid for six months from the date the prize letter is issued. CapeNature reserves the right to accept and award a booking at its sole discretion. Competition closes 15 February 2015.



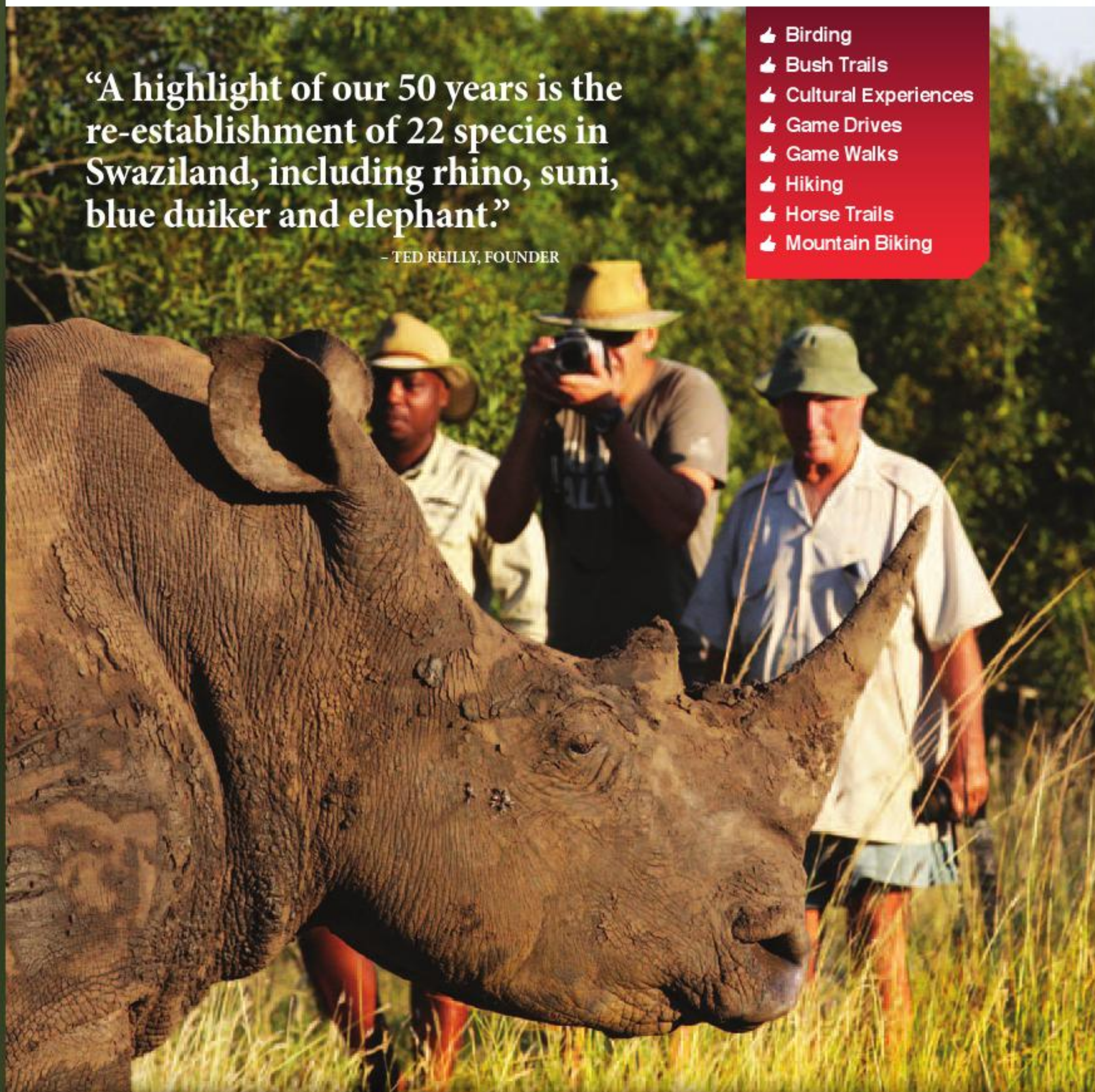
50 YEARS
— OF —
SWAZI NATURE CONSERVATION



“A highlight of our 50 years is the re-establishment of 22 species in Swaziland, including rhino, suni, blue duiker and elephant.”

— TED REILLY, FOUNDER

- 👍 Birding
- 👍 Bush Trails
- 👍 Cultural Experiences
- 👍 Game Drives
- 👍 Game Walks
- 👍 Hiking
- 👍 Horse Trails
- 👍 Mountain Biking



A dream destination for nature lovers

The Kingdom of Swaziland's Big Game Parks began with a young man and his vision, backed by the support of the Swazi Monarchy. Five decades later our founder, Ted Reilly, still watches over the animals that lie so close to his heart. On 11 July 2014, we celebrated our milestone, renewing our commitment to our parks and people. We invite you to be a part of the next 50 years. You'll see that Big Game Parks provides a haven for wildlife – and a welcome retreat for outdoor adventurers.

ALL-INCLUSIVE ACCOMMODATION • SELF-CATERING CHALETs • BACKPACKERS • CAMPING

www.biggameparks.org | +268 2528 3943 | reservations@biggameparks.org



Paying **too much** for car insurance?
Switch to OUTsurance and **save!**

Premium: R 532 pm

OUTbonus: R 2,033



52 year-old man | 2014 Toyota Fortuner 2.5D-4D RB | Excess R3,600 | Hail damage cover included

Save monthly on your car insurance
or **R400** cash is yours!

SMS "WILD" to 31495

Standard rates apply.
and we'll call you for a quote.



S U R A N C E

**You always get
something out.**

OUTsurance is an authorised financial services provider.

The OUTbonus displayed is paid after 3 claim-free years and is premium dependent. Premiums are vehicle and risk profile dependent. Ts and Cs apply.

Car

Home

Business

Life